

The Strange Adventures of Emma

by the same author



Rufus: the Seafaring Rat

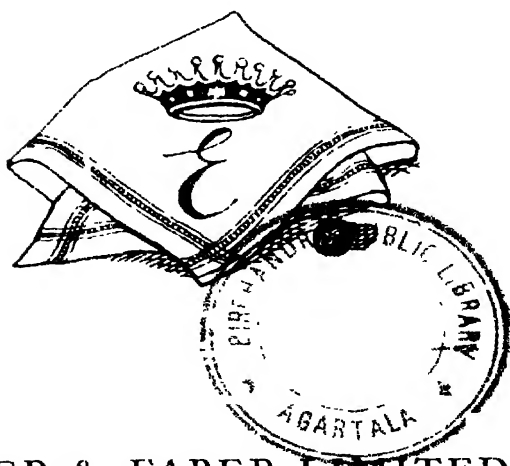
THE STRANGE ADVENTURES OF EMMA

by

DOROTHY ANN LOVELL

illustrated by

IRENE HAWKINS



FABER & FABER LIMITED
24 Russell Square
London

*First published in mcmxi
by Faber and Faber Limited
24 Russell Square London W.C.1
First published in this edition mcmlxiv
Printed in Great Britain by
John Dickens and Co Ltd Northampton*

Contents

I. Emma Plans an Escape	<i>page</i> 9
II. Out in the Moonlight	23
III. "The Password is 'Cherry Pie' "	36
IV. A Night of Adventure	46
V. Extraordinary Things Happen	61
VI. Number One Hundred and One	72
VII. Flight Through the Air	81
VIII. Emma Meets Sir Ralph the Rover	92
IX. On an Unknown Shore	105
X. With the Punch and Judy Show	117
XI. The Man with the Black Hair	127
XII. The Famous Dancer Arrives	138
XIII. "Fame, Emma, Fame!"	147
XIV. The Royal Doll Comes Home	156

CHAPTER I

Emma Plans an Escape

This is the story of Emma, and of the strange adventures that befell her not so very long ago.

Emma was a wooden doll, with a sharply pointed nose and an eager expression. She was dressed in an old-fashioned poke bonnet beneath which showed two neat plaits of brown hair. Her cape was full, and her skirt, of stiffened silk, still fuller, standing out in a circle around her tiny feet. She carried a little muff made of the same material as her gown, and a cloth bag. The bag contained a pearl button and a minute handkerchief.

It was this handkerchief which made Emma what she was.

Many years ago, the tiny square of cambric had been hemmed in a royal nursery by a little princess whose fingers had also embroidered the golden "E", surmounted by a fairy-like crown, in the corner. This same princess had made Emma's

Emma Plans an Escape

gown and cape, and had placed the button and the handkerchief in the bag.

No doll held her back stiffer or her head higher than Emma, which perhaps was not to be wondered at considering her past history. But there were times when it might have been easier to droop a little for her life had become one incessant round of monotony. Instead of living in a palace as she had once done, she stood, year in year out, on a shelf in a museum, staring through the big glass doors of a cabinet at the visitors who stared back in turn, and listening to the muffled sound of their voices.

She shared the case with other dolls, to be sure, but they were mostly of the mild kind and did not seem to be troubled by the life. On her own shelf was a Scottish Highlander, a Persian Shah with jewels on his hat and coat, a rag Nurse with a child in her arms, a wax Nun, and a Monk. The Nun and the Monk hardly ever said a word, and the Nurse contented herself by humming very quietly, so there were only the Highlander and the Shah left. Emma sometimes talked to them a little, but she couldn't always understand what the Highlander said and the Shah had never learned to speak English properly.

Sometimes Emma wished she could be moved either to the shelf above or to the shelf below, both of which contained more dolls. She only saw



She stood, year in year out, on a shelf in a museum.

Emma Plans an Escape

them when they were all taken out at the same time in order that the case might be given an extra special dust, but they called to her now and then and she thought they were a more promising lot.

There was one wooden doll who, like herself, was very weary of the Museum. She was rather tall, with a dress that fell to her feet, and a frilled muslin apron and lace cap. She had pink cheeks and a black net over her hair, and her name was Maud. It was Maud who first thought of escaping, although, when it came to making up her mind, she decided it was too risky.

It was this very risk, however, that appealed to Emma. Something inside her rose at the thought of it. She decided, if Maud wouldn't escape with her, she would escape alone, and began to make her plans.

When the Nun heard about it she shook her head.

"It would be very wrong," she said.

"O no, it wouldn't!" cried Emma. "They have no right to lock us up here as if we were prisoners."

"Not prisoners," the Nun corrected in her mild voice, "but very precious dolls. That is why we are under lock and key."

"Then I don't want to be precious any more," retorted Emma.

Emma Plans an Escape

The Nun did not reply, but sank into her black clothes and became fearfully silent.

Emma was used to this and took no notice. She was still determined to escape. Outside the room in which the case stood she could see the tops of trees, and birds flying about, and the sun shining. She could hear, though very faintly, the buzz of the world that was enjoying itself in the open air, and the remembrance came back to her of the time when she had shared walks and drives with her little Princess. Somehow, she told herself, she must find her Princess again and be a free, happy doll.

The Museum was looked after by a number of men dressed in uniform. There was one called George who was bigger and heavier than the others. George didn't like moving about very much, nor did he like answering questions when visitors wanted to know anything. All he would do was to say they could find it out by buying a catalogue at the entrance, which was rather unfair because the Dolls' Room was at the top of the building and there was no lift.

George sat by the window most of the time looking out at the Park, and singing a sort of song half under his breath as if he were thinking of something quite different. Emma could never hear what it was about although he sang it so

Emma Plans an Escape

often, except one little bit which went like this:

*I've got a gal across the sea,
And she is very fond of me.*

Emma didn't believe for a moment that George really had a "gal" across the sea, but the words gave her a strangely empty feeling as if something were missing. It would be nice, she thought, to have someone to be fond of, and to know that someone was fond of you. Dolls, she told herself, were meant for that sort of thing, and not to be kept locked up in a museum.

She confessed as much to Maud one night after the lights had been put out, although it meant calling rather loudly because, of course, they were on different shelves, and Maud agreed; but the Nun crossed her hands in front of her, and slipped them into the openings of her wide sleeves as if her fingers were cold.

"You are wrong," she said. "We are put here for a purpose."

"What purpose?" asked Emma, giving her muff a little toss.

But the Nun wouldn't say, and Emma felt quite sure she didn't know.

"Purpose or not," said Emma, after the Nun had had plenty of time to think of an answer, "I'm going to escape, and if no one will come with me, I shall escape alone."

Emma Plans an Escape

It sounded very grand in the dark, and Emma felt quite proud of her own daring, but when she tried to think how it was to be done, and what would happen once she was out, she didn't feel quite so sure of herself. No one knew this, however. They all thought how brave she was—except the Nun, who didn't approve at all.

There were a few minutes every morning, before the Museum doors were opened to the public, when the glass case was unlocked by George to let Mrs. Gingham, the charlady, dust the shelves. In those few minutes the escape must be made. Somehow she would have to get down from the shelf to the floor. This meant a considerable drop, which no doll of Emma's size could manage with any degree of safety. She might have climbed down, of course, but there was nothing to hold onto, and a climb in any case, would take up too much time. She must think out a way which would be both quick and safe, although, at the moment, such a thing seemed well-nigh impossible.

Once on the floor she would hide in the building for the rest of the day and get out after dark. Exactly how that was to be done she didn't know, because she couldn't remember what the entrance was like, and had no idea what time the doors were shut. She was quite sure, however, that the safest thing was to go under cover of darkness,

Emma Plans an Escape

otherwise someone "might recognize her and bring her back.



All this called for a great deal of thought. In a way she was glad that Maud had decided against

escaping, because there is much more chance of two people being discovered than of one, and although Maud would have made a good companion, she was a little inclined to hold back, and holding back when one is running away is fatal.

That night she told the dolls what she proposed to do. There was considerable excitement on all three shelves, and everyone had something to say, except the Nun, who remained in complete silence.

"If I can think of a way to get down I shall go to-morrow," Emma announced; "the weather is fine and warm and I see no reason for further delay."

"You must take my parasol with you!" cried a little doll on the top shelf. "It might be useful." And, rolling it up very tight, she pushed it through the space between the shelf and the glass.

Emma thanked her very much. It was a big thing to part with a parasol.

"And 'ere is a leetle gift from me," announced the Shah, who had been fiddling with something on the front of his coat. "It is wan af my jow-wels."

Emma could hardly believe it when he slipped a diamond button into her hand.

"It weel be useful to you," the Shah added as he took his place once more at the end of the shelf, facing the glass door as if nothing had happened.

Emma dropped the diamond button very carefully into her bag. She felt quite overcome, for she knew how much the Shah valued his jewels, and what it must mean to him to part with one of them.

It was a long and rather difficult night, for half of Emma was glad and half of her was sorry. She was glad that she had made up her mind to go, but sorry to be parting with her friends. It was dreadful to think that she might never see any of them again, for they had been good comrades through the monotonous years.

Between three and four in the morning she almost decided to give the whole thing up. The world outside the building was so great, and she was so small—almost nothing at all, when you came to think of it. And she knew so little about what to do and where to go and how to manage things.

She stared into the darkness which looked so very dark, darker than usual perhaps, and tried to be brave. And then she remembered her royal handkerchief and was herself again.

The first light of morning had begun to lift the shadows from the room when a most amazing thing happened. A voice—a very muffled and indistinct sort of voice—whispered something.

At first Emma took no notice, thinking it must be a breath of wind. But after a moment or two it

Emma Plans an Escape

spoke again, and then she knew that it was really a voice, and that it came from the direction of the Monk.

She turned her head. He was looking straight in front of him as he always did, and only his lips were moving.

"I will lend you my rope," he said, so softly that she could hardly make out the words. "If I undo the knots it will be long enough. You can hold one end and I will hold the other. You will be quite safe."

He had never taken his eyes off the glass all the time he had been speaking, but his fingers were already busy with the strong piece of rope that encircled his brown habit and which hung in a series of hard knots in front of him.

Emma was so completely taken aback that she couldn't think of anything to say. The Monk had always been the most silent member of the whole collection, so silent, in fact, that she had often forgotten his existence. He had been completely eclipsed by the Nun who, though of few words and actually shorter than he, seemed to tower over him. Knowing how much opposed to the escape the Nun was, the lending of his rope meant enormous courage, and Emma was filled with admiration. She was about to thank him when she noticed that his lips were drawn up in a way that seemed to say "Hush!" Evidently he wanted to keep what

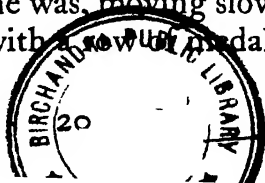
Emma Plans an Escape

he was doing from the Nun as long as possible which, of course, was quite wise.

Every minute the light in the room was getting stronger and stronger, and already there were sounds of movement in the building. Very soon George would arrive, his boots clicking on the bare floor and his breath coming and going with the effort of having mounted the stairs. First he would open the windows, then he would take a walk round to satisfy himself that everything was in order, and then—then—he would unlock the glass doors of the case!

Emma's heart went pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, pit-a-pat, in a most troublesome way, as if it were trying to escape ahead of her and couldn't wait another minute. She clutched the parasol tightly. Fortunately her muff and bag were suspended from her neck by pieces of ribbon so that she did not need to hold them. This meant that she had one hand free, and with this hand she would have to hold onto the end of the Monk's rope. It was a desperate adventure, becoming more and more desperate, it seemed, as the time for action drew near.

Click, click, click. That was George! Emma fixed her eyes on the door through which he would come. Here he was, moving slowly as usual, a big, heavy man, with a row of medals pinned to his tunic.



Emma Plans an Escape

He opened first one window and then another, pausing to lean out and view the Park. Very softly he hummed the tune that always seemed to be running through his head, tapping the toe of his boot on the floor as he did so.

*I've got a gal across the sea,
And she is very fond of me.*

The words, and the open window, and the morning light, combined, gripped Emma. All the fears of the night had gone. She was no longer a little creature venturing forth into an enormous, unknown world, but a Royal Doll, a very precious Royal Doll, who would cross the sea, or do anything else that was necessary, in order to find her Princess again.

Time was getting very short. George had left the windows and was moving about somewhere on the other side of the room. Any moment now he might come with his key and throw the glass doors open. She glanced at the Monk. The rope was still round his waist, but the two ends were lying loosely on the shelf with the twisty places where the knots had been for so long.

Emma knew very little about ropes, but she supposed that what a sailor could do she could do, and hadn't the Monk told her she would be quite safe?

He was looking so calm and quiet that she half wondered if he had forgotten.

Emma Plans an Escape

"Are you ready?" she whispered. "I may have to go any minute now."

The Monk didn't look round but he nodded very slightly.

Emma turned her head in the other direction, facing the rest of the dolls.

"I shall have to start as soon as the doors open," she said, "so I had better say good-bye."

"Good-bye, good-bye," said the Nurse Doll and the Highlander. The Shah said something in his own language which sounded very grand.

"We shall meet again—you and I—yes?" he added.

"O yes, indeed!" said Emma.

She could hear George approaching.

"Good-bye Maud, good-bye everybody!" she cried.

George had taken out his key and was fitting it into the lock. Then, with the little squeaky sound they always made, the doors swung open.

CHAPTER II

Out in the Moonlight

THE fresh morning air from the window blew into the glass case, and Emma's little pointed nose twitched. Already she could feel the world, with its store of excitements, greeting her. George moved away, and at the same moment the Monk picked up one end of the rope.

"Ready?" he whispered.

"Yes," said Emma.

"Hold this end," he said, putting it into her hand. "Let yourself over the edge as gently as you can. I will pay the rope out a bit at a time, quite slowly."

Emma did exactly as she was told. It would have been far easier if she had not had the parasol, but she couldn't help that, and to have thrown it down ahead of her would have made too much noise and might have smashed it.

Gripping the rope tightly, she sat down on the edge of the shelf and slipped herself slowly over. The Monk, who had stepped forward, twisted the

Out in the Moonlight

spare part of the rope round his waist again and let it out a few inches at a time.

At the moment that Emma left the shelf there was a jerk, but she held on bravely, and after that, although the strain was severe, she did not feel anxious.

While she was still a few inches from the floor, the length of rope gave out and she had to jump, landing quite safely, however, with the parasol intact and nothing missing.

At that very moment, just as she was gathering herself together, a step sounded close at hand, and like a scared mouse Emma flew behind the large wooden rocking-horse that stood close to the window.

Not a moment too soon. There, in the room, was Mrs. Gingham with her duster and brush, making her way towards the case.

The Monk, realizing the danger, was already pulling up the rope, and the rest of the dolls were staring in breathless anxiety, with the exception of the Nun who still remained immovable. From first to last, while the escape was in progress, she had stood perfectly still, showing her disapproval by a frozen silence.

Fortunately Mrs. Gingham was an unobservant person. She had a great many cases to dust and was not particularly interested in her work, her one wish being to get back to her own family, so

Out in the Moonlight

it was not to be wondered at that she did not notice an empty place on the middle shelf, or that one of the Shah's diamond buttons was missing and the little doll's parasol had gone. She flicked here and there in an absent-minded sort of way, pushed the Monk a little closer to the Nurse Doll without realizing why she did so, shook her duster out of the window and moved on to the next case.

It was then that Emma crept out from her hiding-place and tiptoed across the floor and through the open door into the next room.

She faintly remembered that somewhere, leading from the top floor, was a narrow staircase up which she had originally been brought. It seemed, looking back, to have opened onto a passage which, in turn, led to the various rooms. If she could find this passage she would be able to use the stairs and so get down to the ground floor.

Very cautiously she moved forward, pausing at every step to listen, and keeping close to any piece of furniture behind which she might take refuge. It was a slow business because there were numbers and numbers of rooms, all opening onto each other, and no sign of a passage anywhere.

It was fortunate, however, that neither George nor any of the other men were about, and after a time she stepped out boldly, hurriedly making her way between the countless cases until, all of a

Out in the Moonlight

sudden, she came upon the passage she remembered with the staircase at the end.

The staircase was narrow and steep and she saw at once that there was a great deal of risk in going down. To begin with, each step was bound with a piece of metal on which her little shoes would be certain to make a noise. Secondly, it would take a long time even to get to the next floor because she was not used to going down steps of any description. And thirdly, if anyone chanced to come up while she was going down, there was no place whatever in which to hide.

Still, go down she must—or turn back.

Very carefully, and steadying herself against the lower part of the rails, she began the descent. It took ages, far longer than she could possibly have imagined, but at last she reached the floor below and was able to run along the strip of landing from which the next flight began.

There were more sounds going on here. People were evidently moving about in the near-by rooms. At one moment steps came so close that she drew back against the wall in a panic, but no one appeared.

“Dear me!” said Emma to herself, breathing very hard and hurrying on.

Whatever happened she must not loiter. At any moment George might go back to re-lock the case and find that she was not there. Only the utmost

Out in the Moonlight

urgency would make George go down the stairs, of course, because of having to go up them again, but the loss of a Royal Doll from the Museum would be considered extremely serious, and there was no telling what George might do—he might even run.

The thought of George already hot in pursuit put fresh energy into Emma's flight. She had discovered that the quickest and safest method of going down was to sit on each step as she came to it and let her feet drop to the next. It was not very graceful, but there was no one to see, and anything was better than capture.

At last she came to a landing which, instead of leading to another narrow flight, opened onto a wonderful place with a wide, carpeted staircase descending to a magnificent hall below. The feel of the soft carpet, the glitter of glass, the quiet sense of tremendous dignity, affected Emma in a peculiar way. Every inch of her became royal, so royal indeed that she took the very centre of the stairs, and sweeping down without a thought of who might see her or what the consequences might be, arrived in full possession of the great entrance hall.

At the same moment, a buzzing sound began close at hand, and a man in uniform came out of a room on the left and picked up something that was attached to the wall.



Every inch of her became royal.

Out in the Moonlight

Emma stood still. It was the only thing she could do, for her feet refused to move.

"Hello!" said the man, speaking into the thing he was holding. "What do you say? When? A couple of minutes ago? But there's no one in the building; no, no one but the staff. It's not ten yet, you know, and the doors are all locked. Have another look, she can't have gone far. Fallen out I dare say, and rolled under something. What? You've looked everywhere? Oh, well, I'll come up as soon as I've been through the letters."

He replaced the receiver and went back into the room on the left again.

Instantly Emma guessed that the person who had been speaking at the other end of the line was George, and that he had been buzzing through to say that she was missing.

There was not a moment to lose. She must hide with all speed, and darting across the space that lay between herself and the wall, she made for a dark corner behind a turnstile where she could not be seen.

It was soon evident that her loss was causing much anxiety, so much, in fact, that Emma felt more important than ever. One after another the members of the staff met in the hall to express their views on the case and to suggest the best thing to do. But none of them thought of looking behind the turnstile. They even consulted a police-

Out in the Moonlight

man who was brought in from somewhere outside and who took down particulars in a leather notebook.

"Name?" asked the policeman.

"Emma," said George, whose anxiety had actually brought him all the way down to the hall.

"Age?" asked the policeman again.

But no one seemed to know.

"Very old indeed, I should say," volunteered George. "Belonged to some queen or other, I've heard."

"A hundred—or may be two hundred," wrote the policeman.

"What is she valued at?"

Emma's head poked forward. This was interesting. But again no one seemed to know.

"I'll list her under 'sentimental value'," said the policeman.

"Ridiculous!" said Emma, under her breath.

"There's other things gone too," said George. "A doll's umbrella from the top shelf in the case, and a button off a coat. You can see the threads sticking out. Looks as if someone tore it off deliberate."

This interested the policeman enormously.

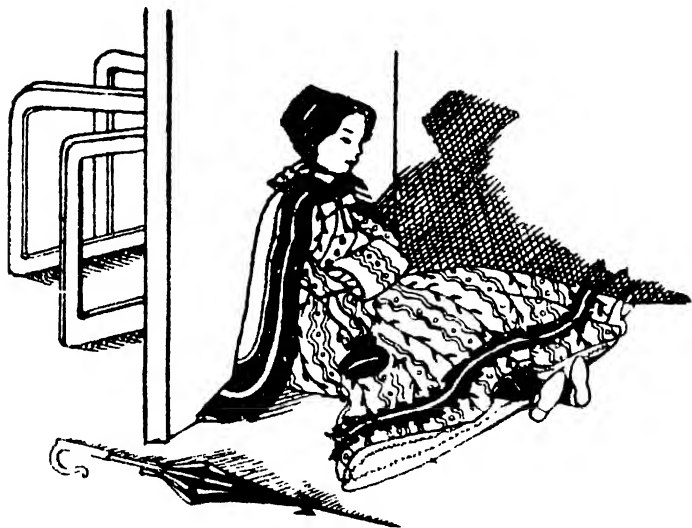
"I'd best go up and investigate," he said.

Meanwhile the doors of the Museum had been opened to the general public and the turnstile was becoming active. People were paying their six-

Out in the Moonlight

pences, and buying catalogues, and asking questions. It was all very exciting, and for awhile Emma almost forgot that her escape was by no means complete.

She still thought it would be best to leave the building after dark, and wondered at what time



the staff went home. It ought to be fairly easy to slip out before the doors were locked, and so get away while it was still night.

Seating herself on the floor with the parasol beside her, Emma tried not to feel impatient although the hours passed very slowly. The first thrill at hearing people ask for the Dolls' Room began to wear off by degrees, and even the con-

Out in the Moonlight

versation about herself, which still continued among the officials, became monotonous.

As the afternoon drew to a close the turnstile grew less active, and finally stopped altogether. It was evident that the day's work was coming to an end.

Emma picked up the parasol and making quite sure that no one was looking, left her place behind the turnstile in order to see what was going on. The uniform officials were closing down for the night; keys were rattling, and a couple of women were covering things up with dust sheets. The big front door had been shut but not bolted, which surely meant that it would be opened again to let the staff out. Emma never doubted that it would be simple enough to get out with them, but when the moment came she found that it was quite impossible. To begin with, they chose to go separately, and the Night Watchman, who was evidently a very careful person, opened the door for each in turn and closed it again after them.

It was terribly trying. Suppose, after all, the escape went wrong! What would she do? She had climbed down by the Monk's rope, but she would never be able to climb up again. Moreover, the thought of living on the shelf had become unbearable. The only alternative was to take the risk and go by day.

As each member of the staff appeared, she tip-

Out in the Moonlight

toed forward, only to dodge back again, until she finally realized that her last chance had gone, for the door was bolted and barred, and the lights were switched off.

It must have been quite late. The building was very still. Emma thought of Maud, and the Shah, and the other dolls standing so patiently with their faces to the glass. She wondered if the Nun had forgiven her—she would like to have been forgiven—and what she had said to the Monk. It was wonderful of the Monk to have helped her like that. It must have been the bravest thing he had ever done.

Very quietly, in the darkness, she whispered a good-night to each of her friends in turn, hoping that somehow it would reach them. And then she settled down on the floor again to wait for the morning.

Just at that moment something happened. The Watchman, who had evidently been on his rounds, arrived back with a torch in his hand. He was whistling softly to himself, perhaps to keep his spirits up in that lonely place, and as he crossed the hall, close to the big door, he paused. Then, drawing back the bolts and bars, he turned the key in the lock and looked out.

A flood of moonlight swept past him into the hall, and as he stood on the edge of the stone porch with his face raised, he had no thought for any-

Out in the Moonlight

thing but the magic beauty of the sky and the quiet restfulness.

From the shadows Emma came pricking, so daintily, so silently, that no one could have known. It was not the Watchman's fault that she disappeared, for anyone who saw her as she slipped by might have mistaken her for the shadow of a passing bird. But at the moment his thoughts were very far away, and his eyes were lost in the bed of stars.

And so it happened that a Royal Doll escaped under his very nose, and he never knew.



From the shadows Emma came pricking.

CHAPTER III

"The Password is 'Cherry Pie'"

The courtyard in which Emma found herself was shut in by old buildings and she had no idea which way to turn. Shadows there were in plenty, lying across the ground like pictures cut from black paper, and she felt well hidden as she made her way among them, confident that no one could have seen her even if anyone had been there. But the place was deserted. Even the Night Watchman had gone, shutting the big door behind him with a heavy clang.

On the left was a narrow passage-way leading to trees. It looked a nice, safe way, and she decided to take it not noticing at first that the iron gates at both ends were securely padlocked. Beyond the gates lay a quiet park. Emma wondered why it had to be locked in. It didn't look as if it wanted to do anything but stay where it was. Fortunately the bars of the gates did not reach to the ground so it was fairly easy to creep beneath them. Once through, she knew that she was really free.

"The Password is 'Cherry Pie'"

Behind her rose the building she had just left, with its many high windows, and roof outlined against the night glow of the city. Some of those windows—the rather smaller ones at the top—belonged to the Dolls' Room, and as she made her way along the moonlit path that skirted the grass, she waved her hand in final farewell.

Ahead of her, where two paths met, was a peculiar looking thing that might have been a very big box or a very small house. It had narrow windows all round and a little pointed roof, but no chimney. Emma was just approaching it when a door opened and out came a man. He wore a uniform, and for an awful moment she thought he was George. Only for a moment, however, because this man was rather thin, and moved quickly.

There was no time to hide or run away. There she was in the full light of the moon and there he was staring at her.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, in a rather horrible voice.

It was not easy to answer because she was not quite sure, so she didn't reply.

"You've no right to be in the Park after dark," he went on. "It's against regulations."

"Oh," said Emma.

"Yes," said the man. "Anyone found is liable to a fine."

"The Password is 'Cherry Pie'"

"I didn't know," said Emma.

"Well, you know now," said the man, "so you'd better get out."

Emma thought his manner was extremely rude. She stiffened every inch of her back and threw up her chin.

"I will certainly get out," she said, "if you will direct me to the Palace."

"Palace?" said the man. "What palace?"

"The Palace to which I belong," Emma replied in her grandest manner.

The man gave a nasty sort of sniff.

"The People's Palace, Mile End Road, is where you ought to be," he said, with his eyes on her bonnet.

Never until that moment had Emma realized how old her clothes were. She had forgotten what her bonnet was like because it had not been taken off for so many years, but her little cape had lost all its colour, and her skirt was worn and crumpled.

For a moment she almost felt ashamed of her appearance, then, remembering who she was, her sense of assurance returned, and bowing very slightly, she passed on down the path without another word, leaving the man gaping after her.

"Not a very good beginning, I must say," thought Emma as she hurried on. "These uniform people are hard to please."

Then she remembered that she still did not

“The Password is ‘Cherry Pie’”

know in which direction the Palace lay. The first thing, however, was to get out of the Park, and then, perhaps, she would find someone who could tell her. It was surrounded by railings which were set wide enough apart for her to get between them, and soon she found herself in an open space, with a big marble thing in the middle and flower-beds on either side. Beyond the marble thing was an enormous building surrounded by very high railings, outside which were posted sentry-boxes.

It was the sight of the boxes that sent Emma hastening forward, for although the building was not what she remembered, the sentries with their busbies and bayonets certainly were.

Fortunately there was not much traffic on the road and she had little difficulty in crossing to the other side and in reaching the gigantic gates which, like all the other gates she had met with that night, were closed.

“What matter?” said Emma to herself, thinking how lucky she was to be small enough to get through, and was just about to make her way between the rails when a sentry, who must have been half asleep, sprang to attention.

“Out of that!” he called sharply.

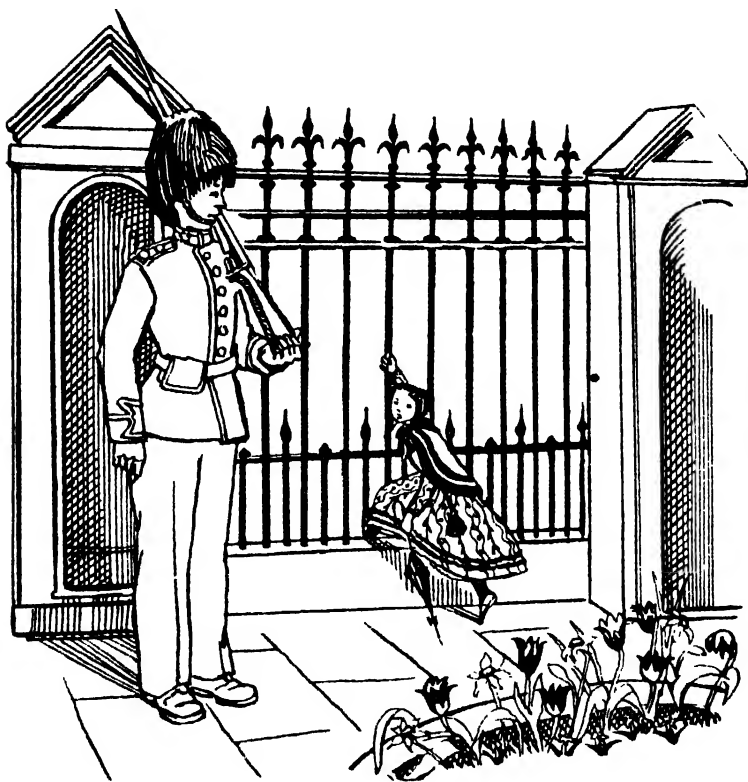
Emma paused, and looked up at him over her shoulder.

“I beg your pardon?” she said.

“The Password is ‘Cherry Pie’”

“Off you go!” he called again. “What are you playing at?”

“Is this the Palace?” Emma asked with dignity.



“Of course it’s the Palace,” replied the sentry. “You know that as well as I do.”

“Then I’m going in,” said Emma, and made a dive forward.

"The Password is 'Cherry Pie' "

"You'll do nothing of the kind," said the sentry, seizing her and dragging her back.

"Take your hands off me," commanded Emma; "you are exceeding your duty."

It was a very disagreeable experience altogether, and not in the least what she had expected. In the old days the sentries had stood to attention when she and her Princess had passed by, and here she was mixed up in what might almost be called a public brawl.

Still, she was not going to be beaten.

Picking up her skirt with her free hand she made another dive at the railings.

"Look here," said the sentry, pulling her back for the second time, "if I have any more trouble with you I'll run you in."

"Through," corrected Emma, with her eyes on the bayonet, which shone menacingly in the moonlight.

"I shall run you in and then I shall run you through," said the sentry, "so you'd better go home before I lose my temper."

"But this is my home," Emma insisted.

"Tell us another!" said the sentry, rather rudely.

Emma turned her back on him and faced the Palace.

"Open the gates," she commanded, in her grandest manner. "Open them at once."

"The Password is 'Cherry Pie' "

But, strange as it may seem, the sentry was not in the least impressed.

"I know everyone what belongs here," he said, "and you ain't one of them, so that settles it."

"I was a member of the Royal Family before—before you were born," said Emma in a withering voice.

At that the sentry let forth a nasty laugh, and as he did so a shadow fell across the pavement.

Like a flash he sprang to attention, for a very superior person in even grander uniform had marched up.

Something prompted Emma to step into the shadow of the sentry-box.

"The password is 'Cherry Pie'," said the Superior Person beneath his breath, but just loud enough for Emma to hear. "Repeat the password."

"Cherry Pie," murmured the sentry into his chin strap.

There was a clank of steel and a click of boots upon the pavement, sounding hollow and silvery as all things do in moonlight, as the Superior Person marched away.

Emma peeped round the edge of the sentry-box. The sentry was standing very stiff and straight, his eyes fixed on the beds of flowers. He seemed to have forgotten all about her.

"The Password is 'Cherry Pie'"

Very quietly she moved out of the shadow behind him and keeping close to the wall made her way to the gate on the left-hand side. There was another sentry on duty here but he was marching up and down.

Just inside the gate was a policeman. He looked very mild and homely in comparison with the soldiers.

Emma waited until the sentry had nearly marched to the spot where he stamped three times and turned round. Then, very bravely, she pushed her face through the bars of the gate and said, "Cherry Pie".

The policeman looked at her.

"Cherry Pie," said Emma again, for the sentry had finished stamping and was coming back. "Cherry Pie, Cherry Pie!"

"All right," said the policeman, "I 'eard you the first time."

He moved his feet very slowly towards the gates.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"I am the Honourable Lady Emma," she replied, on the impulse of the moment. "Be quick, please, I am in a hurry."

"What's all this?" demanded the sentry who, by now, had arrived.

"She says she's the Honourable Lady Hemma," said the policeman.

"The Password is 'Cherry Pie'"

"Never 'eard of 'er," said the sentry.

"She's give the password all right," whispered the policeman behind his hand. "I suppose I'd best let 'er in. 'They'll stop 'er at the door if she's an impostor."

Emma clutched the parasol. If she could have held her head higher or her back stiffer she would have done so, but she couldn't. An impostor, indeed! What further insults was she to endure?

Very, very slowly the policeman turned the key inside the huge lock. Very, very slowly he pulled the great gates open. Emma waited until they stood wide enough to admit the royal coach itself, and then, with complete dignity, she stepped through.

There was a very wide space stretching between the gates and the Palace and she had no idea where the entrance lay. There were several large openings in the walls but these might not be intended for visitors at all and in all probability were strictly private.

It was strange that she did not remember the place, but even if it was not the Palace she used to live in it was royal without a doubt, and stepping out courageously, she made her way towards a door on the right at the top of a short flight of steps. It was not a particularly grand door, but just as she reached it it happened to open to let someone out.

“The Password is ‘Cherry Pie’”

Emma immediately hurried forward and found herself faced by a stiff figure in scarlet and gold livery.

“Excuse me,” she said politely, thinking this the best tone to take, “can I see the Princess?”

The stiff figure’s lips began to move.

“I regret, Madam, that the family is not in residence,” he said.

Emma’s heart crumpled up beneath her little cape.

“Not in residence,” she repeated blankly. “Does that mean that they are away?”

“Precisely, Madam,” said the figure.

“May I ask where they are?” said Emma.

“The family is in Scotland, Madam,” replied the figure.

“Thank you,” said Emma, and the next moment the door was closed and she was left outside.

CHAPTER IV

A Night of Adventure

It was not difficult to get out of the Palace grounds, far easier, in fact, than it had been to get in. Neither the policeman nor the sentry said anything, but she thought she heard them sniff as she passed through the gates,* and was conscious that their eyes were upon her until she was out of sight. Then, laying the parasol down carefully by her side, she seated herself on the curb of the pavement to think.

What should she do?

Across the road in the distance she could still see the top of the Museum. Should she go back? Should she creep in with the staff in the morning and hope that someone would put her in the case again? It seemed she had no other choice, for Scotland was out of the question. No doll, however determined, could hope to walk to Scotland even if she knew the way.

Emma was just preparing to leave the pavement when a taxi arrived so close to the curb that she

A Night of Adventure

had to draw in her toes. At the same moment the door of the house behind her opened and several people came out. They had luggage in their hands and seemed to be in a great hurry.

"King's Cross, as quickly as you can!" they said to the taxi-driver.

The driver touched his cap and clicked down the indicator. The people with their luggage jumped in, slamming the door behind them, and hardly knowing what she did, Emma snatched up the parasol and in the twinkling of an eye was perched on the running board.

It was all done as speedily as that. No time to question or wonder; no time to think ahead; just one movement, and there she was, sitting as far back as she could on the metal strip with her feet sticking straight out before her and London whizzing by.

There was nothing to hold onto and the taxi moved at a great pace, but Emma was not alarmed. She dug her heels into the metal grooves and pressed her back against the door. A thrill of joy ran through her as the lights flashed by. She was off at last, off on her big adventure, and that was all that mattered.

But here they were at the station, with mail vans standing in long red rows; with taxis twisting in and out of the traffic; with porters shouting to people to make a way as they pushed their hand-

A Night of Adventure

trucks, laden with luggage, into the great station itself.

Emma waited until the taxi had drawn up before attempting to slip off. She was sorry the drive was over, and a little confused at the busy sights that met her. Stations are bewildering places at the best of times, and she was not used to them.

Somehow she must manage to find a train going to Scotland, and seeing a porter she dodged her way after him trying to attract his attention. But he was far too busy with a load of luggage to notice her.

After a time she reached a platform with a train waiting beside it and people hurrying to get in. It looked like a train that was going a long way, and something told Emma it might be a Scotch Express. She waited until the porter had put the luggage in the van and then asked him where the train was going to.

"Edinburgh," he replied.

"Thank you," said Emma. "Will you kindly get me a seat?"

He was a nice porter and seemed quite pleased.

"What class?" he asked.

"First," said Emma.

"Facing or back?" he asked again.

Emma didn't know what that meant, but she said "Facing", thinking it best to say something.

They got into a first-class coach and the porter

A Night of Adventure

ran ahead along the corridor until he found an empty compartment.

"Here you are," he said, "and you've got it all to yourself."

He helped her onto a lovely cushiony seat by the window facing the engine, and feeling she ought to give him something for his trouble she took her pearl button out of her bag.

He touched his cap as he put it in his pocket. Afterwards she wondered if he thought it was a sixpence.

In a couple of minutes the train began to move—Ooof-Ooof-Ooof-Ooof; oofoof, oofoof, oofoof, oofoof—out of the station and into the night.

Oh, it was lovely! Emma was not in the least conceited, but she could not help thinking how cleverly she had managed.

Here she was, enjoying the full splendour of a first-class carriage in the great express, rushing along and along and along to Scotland; travelling in state as a Royal Doll should. It was years since she had sat on a cushion, since she had leant her head back against something soft, and it was very nice. The darkness outside only added to the light and comfort within, and Emma wiggled the toes of her little shoes, and spread out her skirt around her, and felt very happy.

Only once before, as far as she could remember, had she been in a train, and that was so very long

A Night of Adventure

ago that it had almost faded from her memory. Most of the travelling she had done had been by carriage, which was extremely tame in comparison and slow to a degree.

"If I had my wish," thought Emma, "I would spend the rest of my life in an express. Nothing could be more comfortable."

She closed her eyes and listened to the throb-throb-throb of the engine, and the click-clickety-click of the wheels, and thought of the miserable existence she had left behind her in the Museum, and of the marvellous time that lay ahead. Faster and faster flew the train, screaming with excitement as it burrowed its great head into the tunnels, and giving a cheery whistle as it crashed past the stations. It must have known that it was on a very special mission, carrying a Royal Doll back to her Princess!

And then, in a moment, everything went wrong. The train had pulled up somewhere for a short breathing space and was just getting up speed again when the door between the compartment and the corridor was pushed back and a man in uniform came in.

"Tickets, please," he said.

Never, until that moment, had the thought of a ticket entered Emma's head. Kings and queens and people like that don't bother about them, and nor had she.

A Night of Adventure

The man had a puncher thing in his hand and clicked it impatiently.

"Tickets, please," he said again.

Emma perceived trouble ahead, but she was determined to hold her own.

"I have no ticket," she informed the man. "I am joining the Royal Family in Scotland."

"It don't make no difference what family you're joining," he said, clicking his puncher again. "I've got to see your ticket or take your name and address."

Emma didn't quite know what to do.

"I have no ticket, as I said before," she replied, "and at the moment I have no address either."

The man looked at her in rather an awful way.

"Then what are you doing travelling first class like this?" he said. "I suppose you'll tell me next that you haven't any money?"

"You are quite right, I haven't," said Emma.

Suddenly she thought of the Shah's jewel. It would be dreadful to part with it, but something had to be done.

Hastily she felt in her bag.

"I have a diamond here," she said. "It once belonged to the Shah of Persia," and she held it out.

The man looked at it.

"Diamond!" he ejaculated. "Glass button, you mean."

A Night of Adventure

"It's a diamond," exclaimed Emma hotly. "How dare you say it is glass!"

"You're wasting my time," said the man. "If you've got no ticket and no address and no money, you'll have to get out at the next stop."

He opened a little book that he carried in his coat pocket, and licking his thumb turned over the pages.

"I suppose you've got a name?" he said. "What is it?"

"Emma," she replied.

"Emma what?"

"Just Emma—nothing else."

"That's no sort of a name," said the man. "What's your family called?"

"I don't belong to an ordinary family," Emma replied.

"No ticket, no money, no address, no family," said the man. "Well, it's a fine record, I must say."

He wrote something in the little book and closed it with an elastic band before putting it back in his pocket. As he did so the train began to slow up until it halted altogether.

"You'd better get out now while the signal's against us," said the man, pulling down the window and looking out. "We're at a level crossing."

"Very well, I will," said Emma, who felt that anything would be better than going on as they were,

A Night of Adventure

He helped her off the seat and out of the train to the road that crossed the line, and there left her.

Emma waited until the signal went down to allow the train to pass, then, turning away from the line, she looked about her.

From what she could see in the darkness she was in the heart of the country, with not a light anywhere save a silvery shimmer which came from the moon. Everything was silent. Even the grass and the trees seemed to be asleep.

"I wish I knew how far I am from Scotland?" she thought. "I may be quite close; and, again, I may be miles away."

The road on which she stood was smooth and wide and stretched on and on between hedges as if it had a purpose in mind. Emma thought it might quite easily be going to Scotland, and decided to follow it until she met someone who could direct her.

It was very strange on that road. Her little feet tapped and tapped as if they were the only feet in the world, and all the time a queer shadow—Emma slid along ahead of her with a poke bonnet, a cape, a crinoline skirt, and a parasol, just like the real Emma, only lying down. As long as she kept her eyes away from the shadow she felt all right, but every time she looked at it she realized how remarkably small she was, a tiny, lonely creature

A Night of Adventure

in that great space of darkness, very far from everyone, and very insignificant.

Emma was no coward but it called for a stout heart to go forward that night, and more than once she felt like giving way altogether. Nothing could have been more lonely than that stretch of country, yet she dreaded meeting anyone. Except for the porter, all the people she had encountered since she left the Museum had been rude, and she wasn't used to it.

"If anyone else is rude," she thought, "it's more than likely I shall be rude back, and that would be so horribly common." Then, throwing her little chin into the air, she stepped forward courageously along the moonlit road.

It was at the next corner that she came upon a curious sort of person with a square thing strapped to his back. The square thing had a handle on one side and a long wooden prop like a leg. It was, as far as Emma could see, an old-fashioned barrel-organ, such as Italians play. There would be no harm, she thought, in asking her way of this person, who was standing still while he adjusted a strap.

"Excuse me," she began, "could you tell me if I am right for Scotland?"

The man gave a jump.

"My sainted aunt!" he exclaimed. "Where did you spring from?"

A Night of Adventure

"I suppose I have as much right on the road as you have," said Emma.

"Oh, sure!" said the man. "Oh, yes, of course. I thought I had the whole blessed world to myself, that's all."

"Well, you haven't," said Emma. "I'm here."

"So I see," said the man. "And who are you?"

Was he going to be rude? Emma gripped the parasol tightly.

"I am on my way to Scotland," she said, ignoring his question, "but I have lost my direction."

"Scotland," repeated the man. "My hat!"

It was a common sort of thing to say and Emma resented it, but she was determined not to show her feelings.

"Is it far?" she asked.

"Not by aeroplane," said the man. "But if you're walking it will take you the best part of a century, and then you won't do it."

"Oh," said Emma.

The man had fixed his strap by now and was preparing to move.

"Is this the way?" Emma asked.

For reply he stretched out his arms like a scarecrow.

"North—South," he said, "Edinburgh—London, if you get me."

"Thank you," said Emma. "Then I'll go on."

She walked as fast as she could and the man

A Night of Adventure

followed at a little distance behind. She could hear the tap of the wooden prop now and then when it knocked against a stone.

Something in the sound of her own feet reminded her of the song George used to sing and it helped her forward.

"And she is very fond of me," she hummed, marching in time to the beat. "And she is very fond of me."

Ahead of her lay Scotland, a long way ahead, perhaps, but nearer every minute, and Scotland held her Princess.

"What will she say when she sees me?" she thought. "Will she tell me I have been brave? Will she take my hands and dance with me across the floor like she used to do, and twirl me round and round? I hope she has not forgotten how we used to dance, pointing our toes and lifting our skirts, and curtsying to the ground."

How far she walked she did not know; it must have been a long distance, for she began to feel very tired. Slower and slower came the tap of her feet, and nearer and nearer came the sound of the wooden prop against the stones, until the shadow of the man with his organ was beside her own and she heard his voice speaking close at hand.

"How would it be if you climbed up for a bit?" he said. "There's room on my organ."

Emma paused to consider.

A Night of Adventure

"I'm used to walking and you're not," he continued. "You'd be all right if you held tight."

It wasn't the kind of travelling she had been accustomed to, but there was no one to see, and it would help her on her way considerably.

"Very well," she said, and added, "thank you."

"I'll kneel down as low as I can," said the man, "and then you can climb up."

He knelt on the rough road and Emma pulled herself into place on the organ.

"Catch hold of the strap," he said. "Now, then, up we go!"

And up they went.

It was not particularly comfortable on the barrel-organ because it sloped sideways all the time and the leather strap was not easy to hold onto. It would have been simpler, too, without the parasol, but she was bound, of course, to take it along with her. Still, it was very kind of the man, and it was certainly one way of getting over the ground.

The man, who said his name was Horatio, talked a good deal as they went along, and Emma listened without feeling there was any need to say much because it seemed like talking into his back.

She soon learned that he had been born in Italy, but had come to England with his little organ when a young boy. He had passed through every town and village in England since then,



It was not particularly comfortable on the
barrel-organ

A Night of Adventure

tramping by night and playing by day. He slept, he said, when he felt like it, but never when the moon was full.

"Why not?" asked Emma, with her eyes on the silvery trail along which they had just come.

"Because the moon makes going so easy," Horatio replied. "It picks you up so as you don't know you're touching nothing, and carries you along quite different from the day. If I hadn't my organ on my back I could run in the moonlight all night long and never stop to rest."

Emma thought she understood what he meant. Although she had been so anxious to escape from the Museum and to reach the Palace she had wanted to dance and dance in the Park; to fix her eyes on the moon and fly over the grass like a feather. The air had been so bright and she had felt so light, and the moon had seemed so big and wonderful. And then the Keeper had stepped into the midst of it all with his clumsy boots and had smashed it up as if it had been glass.

Emma's head began to nod. Horatio had stopped talking and there was no sound but the beat of his boots on the road, and the occasional tap of the wooden prop. She didn't want to go to sleep because it seemed more than likely she would slip off if she did, but her eyes closed all the same and her chin sank into her little cape, and the brim of her bonnet pitched forward until

A Night of Adventure

her face was nearly lost; and then she was dreaming of Mrs. Gingham and her duster, and of the Monk and his rope, and of the Nurse Doll with the child in her arms.

CHAPTER V

Extraordinary Things Happen

It was nearly morning when she awoke. The moon had gone and the night was following close on her heels. A thin mist, rising from the ground, covered the hedges and trees and gave a cool dampness to the air.

She yawned once or twice and, sitting up stiffly, tried to set her bonnet in place by leaving go of the strap for a second or two. Horatio must have felt the movement for he bade her good-morning.

"Good-morning," said Emma. "How far have we come?"

"A fair stretch," Horatio answered.

"Are we near Scotland?"

He gave a short laugh.

"What do you take me for?" he asked. "I ain't got seven-league boots, 'ave I?"

Emma said nothing. She had never supposed he had seven-league boots.

"If I was to go the nearest route, and never stop day nor night, I might do it this side of Christmas,

Extraordinary Things Happen

but I wouldn't care to bet on it," said Horatio.

This side of Christmas! And to think she could have been there now if the collector hadn't made all that trouble over the ticket!

She began to feel very impatient, and the impatience made her fidgety, but she reminded herself that fidgeting did no good. Slow as Horatio was, she would be slower still if she took to her own feet, in fact she doubted if she would ever arrive in Scotland at all. Until something better turned up she would be wise to remain where she was, and having made up her mind to this, she settled herself as comfortably as possible on the sloping organ and looked at the country through which they were passing.

It was pleasant country, not too hilly and not too flat, with grassy borders to the road, and hedges enclosing far-stretching fields. Here and there was a cottage, standing all by itself in its little garden and blinking its windows at the sun. At each cross-road stood a signpost. Emma tried to see the words on them, hoping there might be a mention of Scotland, but there wasn't. Big and important as Scotland was the posts preferred to tell about quite small places, which seemed an odd way of doing things.

Presently they arrived at a village.

"We'll stop here and give them a tune," said Horatio.

Extraordinary Things Happen

Emma looked about her anxiously. She wasn't quite sure what "giving them a tune" entailed, or what part she would take in the affair.

"Hold tight while I swing the organ round," said Horatio.

Emma held as tightly as she could, and in a moment found herself in front, with the organ resting on its pole.

A few people stopped in the road to look at them, and when Horatio turned the handle and a funny tune came out, quite a number of boys and girls collected.

"What's he got on the organ? Is it a monkey?" said one child, gazing up at Emma.

"Nooo," said another child disdainfully. "That's not a monkey."

"Well what is it then?" said the first child.

"I don't know—but it's not a monkey."

"It is a monkey!" cried a little boy. "They always has monkeys—organ-men does."

The first child moved a step or two forward. At the same moment Emma raised the parasol.

"Go away!" she commanded. "Go away, you ignorant little thing."

The child dropped back in amazement.

"I never touched her—I never touched her," she said, beginning to cry.

"Give her a penny," said Horatio. "That's what she wants."

Extraordinary Things Happen

"Let me down," cried Emma. "Let me down at once."

"All right, all right," said Horatio, realizing that she meant business, and the next moment Emma found herself on the ground.

The children moved to a safe distance, looking at her in wonderment as she marched off down the road. One or two of the boys ran after her, but she heard Horatio calling them back.

"You leave her alone," he was saying. "She's a queer one, she is."

And that was the last of Horatio and his organ, so far as Emma was concerned.

It took a considerable time to get over that experience, but gradually, as the day wore on, she walked it off. Never again, she told herself, would she have anything to do with organ-grinders. They might mean well, but they were ignorant people who had no idea how to treat royalty. After she had come to this decision she began to feel better, and little by little the incident faded into the background as new things took its place.

There was much to be decided too. First and foremost was the question of how she was to cover the distance that still lay between herself and Scotland. She had walked for many hours, and as quickly as possible, but something told her that a doll of her size would take a very long time—years and years perhaps—to reach the border.

Extraordinary Things Happen

Emma knew little about geography; she was even rather hazy as to where Scotland lay on the map, except that it was a great distance from London. None of the signposts or milestones told her what she wanted to know, and as she was determined not to ask her way again, she felt extremely uncertain about things.

Towards evening it began to rain a little, and she put up the parasol. It was so stiff to move that she wondered if it had ever been opened before, but, although it was really intended for the sun, it did quite well in keeping her bonnet dry.

As the rain came on more heavily she was forced to shelter, choosing a hollow tree that was exactly fitted to anyone of her size. It was cosy inside the tree, and sitting down she listened to the pit-pitter-pat of the rain on the leaves, and the drippity-drop as it fell to the ground.

She couldn't remember ever having been so close to rain before, and quite enjoyed it, feeling so nice and dry and sheltered. She could smell things too, exciting wet things that might be toadstools, or fairy moss, or little creatures hastening home with the rain shaking off their thick coats as they ran.

It was not at all a lonely place to be in even when it grew dark, and much, much better than the sloping top of the barrel-organ. But she must forget about that organ, and the horrid children, and

Extraordinary Things Happen

all the painful details connected with them, and leaning her head back against the tree Emma slept, comfortably and happily, waking the next day with the feeling that she was ready for anything.

How little did she guess what extraordinary things were going to happen before night fell!

It was the finest morning she ever remembered. Leaving the hollow trunk was like stepping into a rainbow, so full of colour and so radiant was everything. The sky was a clear, soft blue, shading to a pink flush at the horizon, with not a cloud anywhere. Leaves that had fallen during the night, so green and golden and rosy-brown, held little pools of blue rain in their curves, and the road shone so brilliantly that you might have thought it had been polished for the occasion.

"If only Maud were here to share it!" thought Emma as she skipped along. Poor Maud, poor Nun, poor Monk, shut up forever in a glass case when there were mornings like this!

She wondered if George had given up searching for her, or if he was still hoping to get her back. He would be more careful about leaving the case open after this for fear more dolls disappeared. There were many things she would like to know, but for the present she must give her full attention to what was happening around her, for that something important was going on was plain.

Extraordinary Things Happen

At first it was little more than a thrill in the air, an excitement that might well have come with the sunshine and the bright light. And then it was something more—a flag fluttering from a window, a flag on the top of a church tower, a string of flags stretched across a road.

Emma's heart began to throb.

"Flags!" she said to herself, and remembered times long, long ago, when the whole sky was aflutter with colour, and the air was full of music and the shouts of crowds as royalty drove by.

And then a child came running with a tiny Union Jack nailed to a wooden stick in his hand, and another with a red-white-and-blue streamer. Emma could hardly wait to find out what it all meant. Was it possible that they were preparing for a royal visit? And if so, would her Princess be there? Would she see her Princess again this very day?

She hurried on, every step bringing her nearer to the excitement. More flags, more bunting, more streamers! And now everything was quite clear, for high in the air, stretching from one side of the road to the other, were the words "WELCOME TO OUR KING AND QUEEN".

Hardly knowing what she was doing Emma almost ran along the pavement, clutching the parasol with one hand and her little cape with the other. Hawkers were selling programmes in

Extraordinary Things Happen

the gutters giving the route of the procession. There was no need for her to buy a programme however, even if she had had any money, because the road was covered with sand, clearly indicating that the procession would pass that way, and people were standing rows deep along the curb.

It had all happened so unexpectedly that Emma had no time to decide anything. It was impossible to think clearly with so many people pushing and crushing this way and that and struggling to get good places. All the windows were full of spectators; boys were scrambling up lamp-posts and clinging to the cross-bars, every wall and ledge was already in use.

The crowds on either side of the road were kept in place by lines of police wearing their medals and looking particularly smart, and every now and again a very important officer pricked by on a horse. He had a most severe face, and a sword hung at his side showing to what lengths he was prepared to go in order to maintain discipline.

Emma looked here and there trying to find some opening in the crowd through which she could squeeze, for unless she could get near the road she would see nothing at all. Being so very small it was not difficult to worm her way forward; the people were too excited to notice what she was doing, and little by little she crept through

Extraordinary Things Happen

until she found herself standing behind the cordon of police on the very edge of the curb.

She had never been part of a crowd before, and found it rather trying in spite of her excitement. Every few seconds the people behind gave a heave forward so that those in front were pushed like a wave into the road. At the same time the police gave a heave backward pressing them into position again. Emma realized for the first time what it must feel like to be in a mangle, and wondered what would happen when the last bit of breath had been squeezed out of her.

She was most anxious about the parasol, for it seemed in grave danger of being smashed, and more than once her muff and her bag were nearly dragged from her neck. But every moment brought the procession nearer, and the thought of what might then happen nearly sent her heart leaping into her mouth.

Somehow she must see her Princess and make her Princess see her, though how this was to be done she could not imagine since, placed as she was behind the policemen, she couldn't see anything at all. It seemed very hard that the police, who were bigger than anyone else, should be given the front places, and she dodged this way and that, trying to get a squint between their feet.

"Now then!" said someone, who was standing next to her. "Stand still, can't you."

Extraordinary Things Happen

Emma didn't reply. The crowd, she realized, was growing rather touchy, which was hardly to be wondered at. Somebody who tried to get through from the back, saying she only wanted to cross the road, came in for a good deal of abuse, during which Emma learnt that the procession was due to pass any minute.

Any minute! It might be in the street now; it might be almost here! She tried to keep herself from trembling, but it was no use. Even the parasol was jogging up and down. And then she heard the cheering, and at the same time a more desperate push than ever began.

"They're coming!" cried a man who was head and shoulders taller than his neighbours and so could speak with authority. "Steady, there, you'll get trampled on if you're not careful."

"Well, get out of the way then," shouted a stout woman, "you've got no right to be so tall, you 'aven't."

"Shut up!" said someone else.

The cheering drew nearer and nearer. Frantically Emma struggled to see. The police linked their arms and threw their full weight back against the crowd.

It was a desperate moment. Then, suddenly, a little space opened before her, and hardly realizing what she was doing she shot through into the road precisely as the royal car passed by.

Extraordinary Things Happen

"Princess! Princess!" she cried, running forward and waving the parasol.

It was then that all the terrible trouble commenced. There were shouts from the crowd, shouts from the police, shouts from the very buildings themselves. The whole place seemed to be one great shout. So dreadful was the noise and confusion that Emma forgot the procession completely. The entire police force seemed to be converging upon her like an army, backed up by the mass of excited people.

"Stop her! Stop her!" came the cries.

There was little need, however, for Emma had stopped herself in bewilderment, and the next moment was lifted high into the air and onto the back of a horse.

"Get her out of this!" shouted the policeman who had picked her up. "They'll do her a mischief if they get hold of her."

Without hesitation the mounted officer put his horse at the crowd which divided before it like water before the bows of a boat.

CHAPTER VI

Number One Hundred and One

Desperate as everything was, Emma could not help feeling that there was something rather noble about riding on a fine steed above the heads of the crowd with all eyes fixed upon her—even if they were far from friendly. She almost felt like bowing, but, of course, that wouldn't have done at all.

The officer, who had missed seeing the procession, had got a bit worked up altogether, and was extremely short in his manner, so, as soon as they had reached a quiet street, she announced her intention of alighting, thinking there might still be a chance of seeing the royal car from another point along the route.

It was then that the extreme gravity of the situation began to dawn upon her.

"You'll sit where you are till we get to the Lock Up," said the officer. "And I'll warn you that you'd best keep quiet too, for anything you

Number One Hundred and One

say will be taken down and may be used in evidence against you."

The Lock Up! That meant prison. Was she going to be put in prison? But what had she done?

"Excuse me," she said, "I think there is some mistake. I am a member of the Royal Family."

To her great surprise this announcement produced not the slightest effect. It was possible, of course, that the man didn't believe her, but all the same he should have made some sort of reply. Like all the other uniformed people she had met on her adventures—with the exception of the kind porter—he was extremely troublesome.

"Oh, well," thought Emma, "I shall be able to explain it all when I arrive at the Lock Up—and then it will be quite right."

But it was far from being quite right.

The Lock Up was a gloomy building with a determined expression. Everything was very bare inside, and smelt of common soap. There were lots of doors, and stone passages that were so badly lit that, although it was such a fine day, it was all you could do to see where you were going.

Emma felt very uncomfortable; it seemed as if everything was against her. The mounted officer had given her into the charge of another, and less grand, policeman at the entrance, telling him to wait for him in the office while he took his horse round to the back. The office was an ugly little

Number One Hundred and One

room with an enormous calendar on the wall and dozens of keys hanging in rows on nails. It was being looked after by a young policeman who was sitting at a table in a corner tapping the keys of a dusty old typewriter very slowly.

He appeared to be interested in Emma and kept glancing her way, but each time he looked up he tapped a wrong letter and had to rub it out.

At last the officer who had been on the horse arrived with a stout policeman, who took his seat behind a counter on a high stool, and opened a big book in which he commenced to write.

He said she was charged with three offences: Attempting to molest the persons of their Majesties with felonious intent; Obstructing the police in the lawful observance of their duty; and Disturbing the peace.

"Guilty or not guilty?" he asked, leaning over the desk so as to observe her, a very small person, standing stiffly on the floor.

"Not guilty," said Emma.

He then asked her name, address, occupation, and age, to which she replied as best she could, saying that she had only one name, no address, no occupation, and was not sure about her age.

After a good deal of dipping in the ink and writing and blotting, the policeman closed the book.

"Take her to the cells," he ordered.

Number One Hundred and One

"I protest," said Emma. "I told you I am not guilty."

"Take her to the cells," the policeman ordered again.

As she was being led away, she thought the young policeman, who had stopped tapping on the machine, looked sorry.

At the end of the corridor she was handed over to a wardress, a grim-looking woman who told her to come along quietly. She felt like saying she had no intention of doing anything else since escape was impossible. It was a wonder, she thought, that she had not been handcuffed, but possibly the Lock Up did not possess a pair small enough to fit her.

In company with the wardress she travelled a considerable distance past a great number of closed doors, each of which had a small iron grid in the central panel, with a square wooden shutter which could be drawn across the bars or not as required.

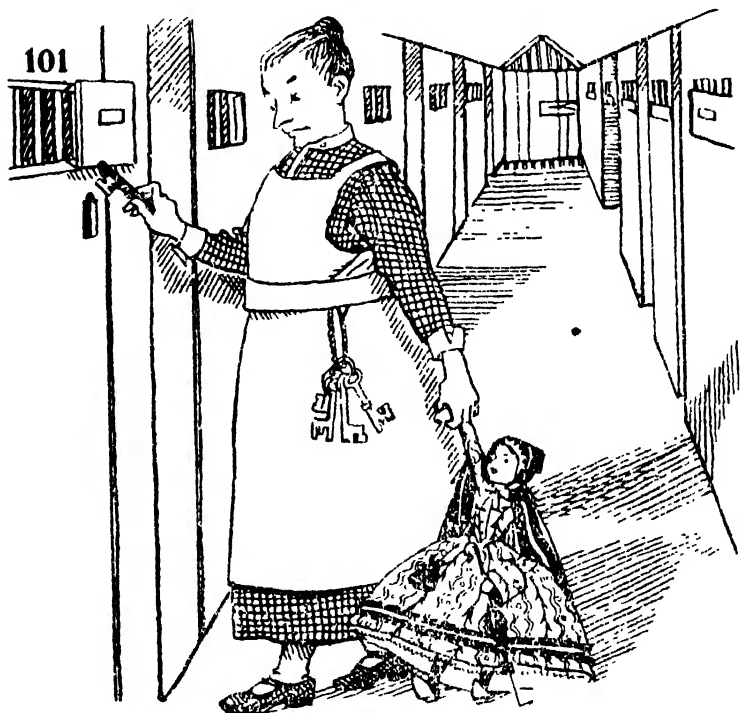
The whole thing was most objectionable and a little frightening. The bunch of keys that hung from the wardress's waist clinked as she walked, and her flat shoes creaked, and her breath came and went. She was rather a stout woman.

At last they came to a halt in front of a door with the number 101 painted on the top. The wardress selected a key, opened the door, pushed

Number One Hundred and One

Emma through, and locked it again behind her.

There was no need to behave like that, Emma thought. It was rude to push, and rude to leave



her alone without a word of explanation.

"It must be the uniform again," she said to herself. "Uniforms produce very bad effects on people."

Even at that troubled moment her thoughts

Number One Hundred and One

went back to the Nun. Perhaps it was her uniform that had made her so severe.

The place she was in was very small. It consisted of four walls, a bare floor, a narrow bed, at the head of which was a barred window without any glass, and a wooden stool. 'That was all.

"Well," said Emma, "kings and queens have been in prison from time to time and, at any rate, I have got the place to myself."

On the way to the cell the wardress had told her she would be kept in prison pending her trial because she had no one who would bail her out. The trial, she said, would take place shortly.

Emma sat herself down on the ground because the stool was too high for her, and tried not to feel injured. It was very difficult, because there was so much to feel injured about. To begin with, she had done no wrong. All the trouble had come from the crowd. If the crowd hadn't shouted the police wouldn't have got worked up and she would have been free to join the royal party in a right and proper way.

What the King and Queen could have thought of the behaviour of their subjects she could not imagine, for it had been a shocking scene from start to finish, and might easily have ended in disaster. She hoped very much that her Princess had not been there, remembering how very greatly

Number One Hundred and One

she disliked upsets of any kind, but particularly if they were in public.

The thought of her Princess reminded her of Scotland and of the terrific time it would take her to get there if she went on like this. If she were given a life sentence she would, of course, never get there at all.

She leaned back wearily against the wall for she had begun to feel very tired. The fact that she was in prison didn't seem to signify very much now; nothing seemed to signify so long as she could rest, and lying down flat, with the parasol to form a sort of tent, she went to sleep.

The next thing she was conscious of was the sound of a door opening and a voice speaking in what seemed to be a very loud tone.

"What's the matter with you, a Hundred and One?" said the voice. "Is something wrong?"

"Well," replied Emma, lying quite still on her back and looking up at the wardress, "yes. As far as I can see, everything is wrong."

"Why haven't you gone to bed?" the wardress asked. "It's nearly midnight."

"Is it?" said Emma. "I must have been asleep for a long time. If you will help me onto the bed I will lie there. The floor is certainly draughty."

She got up and closed the parasol.

"I don't suppose you have ever had a prisoner as small as I am," she went on.

Number One Hundred and One

"You're right there," said the wardress; "no one near so small."

"That's why the stool and the bed are so high for me," said Emma. "It would be difficult to climb onto either of them alone."

"Impossible, I should say," the wardress agreed. "You can use the rug as an extra blanket, or roll it up and have it as a pillow. Most of the prisoners use it as a pillow, unless it turns cold."

She made it into a sort of sausage and placed it at the head of the bed. Emma thanked her. She was not a bad sort of person really.

"Aren't you going to take off your bonnet and shoes?" she asked, as Emma lay down.

"No," said Emma, "I never do."

"Oh," said the wardress, "that's funny, isn't it?"

"I don't think so," said Emma.

"Well, there's no regulations about it," said the wardress. "You can please yourself until you're convicted."

Emma was glad when she had gone and the cell was quiet again. Strange as it might seem, the bed wasn't half so easy to sleep on as the floor, and for many, many hours she lay awake, watching the shadow of the barred window, which the moon had thrown on the wall, creep from one corner to another. She tried not to look at it, but her eyes would stare, like they used to stare at the tree tops

Number One Hundred and One

that swayed with the night wind outside the Museum windows. How often she had watched those trees and planned an escape! And now she had become a still more shut-in prisoner, with no hope of getting free at all.

But was there no hope?

She had often heard of convicts escaping, and although she was not a convict, she could, at least, see what might be done. And with this thought she fell asleep, just as the moonlight began to change to the grey of dawn.

CHAPTER VII

Flight Through the Air

It was a determined Emma who awoke the next morning. Sitting up on the bed she told herself, very definitely, that not another night would she spend in that place.

Some way must be found by which she could regain her freedom, and found at once.

The only possibility lay in the window, the bars of which were wide enough apart for her to get through. But the window, she realized, must be high above the ground, and she had no means of lowering herself—not even a monk's rope.

With very great effort she turned the rolled-up pillow onto its end, leaning it against the wall so as to make a slanting way up which she could climb and look out.

The cell was much higher up than she had imagined, in fact it made her feel quite dizzy to look down. The sides of the building, as far as she could see, were bare, rising from a paved yard surrounded by very high walls with spikes on the top.

Flight Through the Air

It was about as hopeless a look-out as it could be. Yet Emma did not despair. Beyond the spikes she could see the country, and come what might she determined to get there.

At that moment she noticed something which had been close at hand all the time but had somehow escaped her attention. It was a long piece of strong wire which evidently came from the roof and, crossing in front of the bars, went down at a gradual slant to an open window on the ground floor where it disappeared. Emma had never heard of the wireless, or aërials, and things like that, so did not know what the wire was for. It did, however, suggest a possible means of escape, though how it might be used she could not at first imagine.

"I wish I were a tight-rope walker," she said to herself. "But even if I were it would be dreadfully difficult to keep steady on such a downward path."

She thought and she thought, and at last she hit on a plan.

It was a pretty desperate plan, but prisoners are pretty desperate people, otherwise they wouldn't bother to take the risks they do. There were numbers of things that might have gone wrong, and if they had, the results would have been disastrous, but Emma was plucky. There was also a strong flavour of adventure about the whole thing, and adventure was what she loved above all else.

"So," said Emma, "here goes!"

Flight Through the Air

But first she had to climb down the sloping pillow and get the parasol which was lying on the stool. Everything depended on the parasol, and opening it, she examined the spokes and the silk carefully. She also examined the little crook handle which, being made of real ivory, was very strong.

Then, climbing up the pillow again, she crept onto the sill very cautiously, and turning round gave the pillow a kick so that it toppled back onto the bed.

That was to put the wardress off the scent.

The next thing was extremely difficult and dangerous. Emma hadn't a good head for heights, otherwise she could have stood on the sill without holding onto the bars, which would have made things much easier. As it was, however, she had to grip tight with one hand and open the parasol with the other which took a long time. When, at last, this was done, she had to hook the handle onto the wire and, still holding firmly to the bars, step into the parasol itself.

That was the terrifying part of it, for Emma had a horrible feeling that it might tip up sideways, or rush down the wire before she was ready, or break or something. But there was no turning back, and drawing the parasol as close to the window as she could, she stepped into the middle of it and let go her grip on the bars.

For a moment the parasol swung at a nasty

Flight Through the Air

angle, with Emma clinging to the handle much in the same way as a sailor clings to the mast of a ship that is foundering. Then it righted itself and went flying down the wire at a breathless speed, through the open window, and bang! onto the floor of a room.

The impact was so great that she was nearly pitched out. But neither she nor the parasol—which must have been remarkably well made—were any the worse.

“Gosh!” exclaimed a voice.

Emma looked round in startled alarm.

There, kneeling before a fireplace, with his hands full of coal and newspapers, was the young policeman who had been typing in the office when she had arrived on the previous day.

They stared at one another for several seconds. Then Emma removed herself from the parasol with as much dignity as she could command, closed it, and drawing herself up asked to be shown the way out of the building.

“Not so fast. Can’t be done. Sorry,” said the young policeman.

“Why not?” Emma demanded.

“You know quite well, why not,” answered the young policeman. “You’re an inmate, that’s why. And how did you get out of your cell, anyway?”

Emma didn’t deign to reply. She felt within



Then it righted itself and went flying down the wire at a breathless speed.

Flight Through the Air

her bones that the young policeman was verging on rudeness.

"I'll have to take you back," he said, getting up from the mat on which he had been kneeling. "What's your number?"

"Now, listen to me," said Emma, summoning up all her courage. "I am not going back to that cell for you or anyone else. I am a member of the Royal Family and you have no right to detain me."

"You'll have to prove that in court," said the young policeman.

"I can prove it here!" said Emma.

"How?" said the young policeman.

Very deliberately Emma loosened the ribbons of her bag and drew out her cambric handkerchief.

"This proves my identity," she said, holding it out with a flourish.

The young policeman bent down, and examined the crown and initial in the corner. His hands were too dirty to touch the handkerchief, but he seemed impressed.

"A royal Princess embroidered that," said Emma, "and if anything happens to me there will be trouble."

"Oh," said the young policeman. "Why didn't you say so when the officer charged you?"

"He didn't charge me," said Emma, thinking

Flight Through the Air

of the mounted policeman. "He saved me from the crowd, that was all."

"I don't mean that sort of charge," said the young policeman. "I mean what the Superintendent said in the office."

"I told him I was not guilty, and he ought to have believed me," said Emma. "But now that you understand, it will be all right."

"I've got no business to interfere," said the young policeman. "It's as much as my job's worth to aid and abet a prisoner."

"It's as much as your job is worth knowingly to detain a member of the Royal Family," retorted Emma, amazed at her own flow of language which certainly sounded very grand indeed. "It might cost you your head!"

At that moment there came the unmistakable sound of heavy footsteps outside.

"Quick!" said the young policeman under his breath, and picking up a newspaper which still lay on the floor by the fireplace, he threw it over her. The next instant the door of the room opened and in came no less a person than the Governor of the Lock Up himself.

Emma stood as still as a post beneath the paper. The young policeman stood to attention, and the Governor stood like a giant in the doorway.

"It has just been reported to me that Number One Hundred and One has escaped," he said in

Flight Through the Air

a deep, thunderous voice. "I have ordered the staff to search the building and to organize a comb-out of the neighbourhood. Leave whatever you are doing and take duty at once."

"Yes, sir," said the young policeman.

"You will patrol the North Road district," said the Governor. "Use a motor-cycle, and keep in touch with me by telephone. Report anything that may lead to an arrest. It is obvious that the prisoner had an accomplice outside the building."

"Yes, sir," said the young policeman again.

"Here is a description of the prisoner," said the Governor. "It will help you to identify her."

He handed the young policeman a sheet of closely typed writing.

"Thank you, sir," said the young policeman, folding it twice and buttoning it carefully into the breast pocket of his uniform.

From under the newspaper Emma listened breathlessly. The slightest movement would have produced a crackling sound which would have given her away. It seemed impossible that the Governor did not notice that there was something wrong with the shape of the newspaper and become suspicious, but perhaps he was too much concerned about the recapture of Number One Hundred and One.

She heard him cross the floor and sit down at

Flight Through the Air

a desk, and then she heard the young policeman go, closing the door behind him.

It was a dreadful situation to be in. The Governor might decide to go on sitting at his desk for hours, and at any moment she might sneeze, or twitch, or get cramp, or shiver, or hiccough, and that would mean instant capture and return to the cell.

Emma's nose began to feel uncomfortable. It was something to do with the smell of the print which was very strong indeed. Without a question of doubt a sneeze was approaching—some little distance off as yet, but rapidly coming closer.

"Oh, my goodness!" she thought, screwing up her face to try to ward it off.

It was just as the crucial moment arrived that the door of the room opened again.

"Excuse me, sir, I think I left a newspaper here," said the voice of the young policeman, and before she knew what was happening, Emma felt herself grabbed in a firm hand and lifted into the air.

"Just off, sir," said the voice again in reassuring tones.

"All right, Simpson," replied the Governor, and the next minute Emma, still inside the paper, was being rushed through the building under the arm of the young policeman.

Somehow, in the excitement of it all, the sneeze was forgotten.

Flight Through the Air

It was not until they were in the garage that Simpson told her what he was going to do. The newspaper had slipped off and she was standing, parasol in hand, on the oily floor.

"We've got to hustle," he said, "and we've got to take no risks. Have you ever been on the back of a motor-cycle?"

"No," said Emma. As far as she knew she had never even seen one.

"Pity," observed Simpson. "But it can't be helped. It's your only chance."

He was wheeling the machine out of a dark corner as he spoke. Emma thought it looked somewhat alarming.

"Now, how can we disguise you?" said Simpson, pausing for a second to look at her. "Half the town saw you yesterday, and they'd know you again anywhere."

"I'll hide behind the parasol," said Emma.

"Hide behind the parasol, with me going at eighty miles an hour!" said Simpson. "It's all you'll do to hold on."

He picked up the newspaper, and folding it into a kind of cape, pinned it round her.

"There," he said, "that's better. Anyone would think you were a parcel. The seat's a bit slippery but as soon as I'm ready grip hold of my tunic."

"Yes," said Emma.

Simpson went outside the garage door and

Flight Through the Air

peered to right and left. Then, convinced that the coast was clear, he pushed the machine into the yard and lifted Emma onto the seat.

"All right behind there?" he asked over his shoulder as he prepared to start.

"I think so," said Emma, not feeling too sure about it but trying to be brave.

The next moment the machine began to vibrate; there was a loud throbbing sound, a jerk, and off they went.

CHAPTER VIII

Emma Meets Sir Ralph the Rover

Emma clutched Simpson's tunic with her free hand and kept her head well down. They didn't go very fast at first because of the traffic, but once outside the town they began to move at a most alarming speed. The wind whistled round the newspaper, which tore away bit by bit until there was nothing of it left. The parasol was in danger of flying away too, and more than once her bonnet felt as if it were being lifted from her head.

It was a wild experience, and she was not a little relieved when, at last, Simpson began to slow down.

"You'll be safe now," he said, halting the machine at the side of the road and helping her off the seat.

"I am very much obliged to you," said Emma. "You have been most kind."

"You're welcome," said Simpson.

Suddenly Emma thought of her diamond, and

Emma Meets Sir Ralph the Rover

diving her hand into her bag she drew it out.

"Will you accept this?" she said. "It once belonged to the Shah of Persia. I would like you to have it."

But Simpson shook his head.

"Against regulations," he said, with a smile. "Thanks all the same," and turning the machine round he gave a half salute and was gone.

It was a long, straight road on which Emma found herself, one of those roads that delight in being long and straight. "Ha!" it seemed to say, "Now I've caught you! And you can't escape either, because the fields on both sides are private."

Emma glanced down at her little feet and measured them against the road.

"Not the right sort of feet at all," she thought. "Still, they are all I have got, so I had better use them." And turning her face away from the town she set off towards the north.

If you have ever seen a doll—a small-sized doll—walking along a high road you will realize what a very long time it took Emma to cover a mile, and the tremendous number of steps she had to take because of her short stride. Her little shoes, that were made for drawing-room carpets, resented the rough surface, and more than once she found herself wondering if the soles had come off, so sharp were the stones, but she plodded on,

Emma Meets Sir Ralph the Rover

holding the parasol up to keep the sun from her face. It was a warm day, and the further she went the warmer it seemed to get.

At last she came to a low bridge crossing a river, and because the water looked gentle and kind she decided to leave the road and sit by it for a time. The grass on the banks was long, so long that she did not at first see a small figure bending down by the brink with a rope in his hands, attached to the other end of which was a boat.

Hearing a movement behind him, the small figure turned round.

He was a sailor-man doll, with red cheeks and a neat little cap. He wore wide trousers, and a square collar, and a dark blue jersey, and a lanyard and whistle. In fact, he was a perfect little sailor-man.

"Good-day," he said in such a nice way that Emma liked him at once.

"Good-day," she replied, lifting her skirt a trifle as she gave a little curtsy.

"Excuse me a moment," said the sailor-man, tugging at the rope. "I mustn't lose my boat whatever happens."

The boat was a trim little craft, partly white and partly green, with two seats across the centre and one in the stern. On her side was painted the name "Daphne".

The sailor-man dragged her onto the bank and

Emma Meets Sir Ralph the Rover

made the rope fast round his waist so that she couldn't escape. Then he turned to Emma and lifted his cap.

"I am Sir Ralph the Rover," he announced. "But being just an ordinary sailor I have dropped the title. They call me the Rover because I am much given to roving. I am roving at this very moment as a matter of fact!"

"O yes," said Emma. "Have you roved far?"

"A goodish stretch, but not as far as I could have done if I had had a better boat," Ralph answered.

"What is the matter with her?" asked Emma, giving the stern a tiny poke with the parasol.

"Numbers of things," replied Ralph. "To begin with, there are no rowlocks which makes it very difficult to row. And, secondly, the rudder doesn't work. The steering ropes are only for show because the rudder won't move one way or the other."

"Then how do you manage?" asked Emma.

"As well as I can," Ralph replied. "But I don't get very far because I keep on running into the bank, and the oars will slip into the water."

They sat down together on the grass.

"I must introduce myself," said Emma. "I belong to the Royal Family and am on my way to join the Princess in Scotland."

"Oh," said Ralph. He seemed very impressed.

Emma Meets Sir Ralph the Rover

"I left London three days ago and have been travelling ever since," Emma continued. "Have you any idea how far Scotland is from here?"

Ralph considered for a moment.

"Scotland," he repeated slowly. "Well, I couldn't rightly say. I have never been to Scotland myself but I've heard people talk of it."

"It's a big place," said Emma. "It can't be very far away because I've come a long distance already."

Suddenly Ralph sprang to his feet and began unhitching the rope from his waist.

"I'll row you there!" he said. "I'm getting a bit tired of England, to tell the honest truth, and should like to visit another country."

"That is most kind of you," said Emma. "I should be delighted."

Ralph gave her his hand as she stepped into the boat, and told her to sit on the little seat in the stern. Then he threw the rope into the bows, pushed the boat down the bank, jumped lightly in, and taking the oars began to row upstream.

Emma arranged her skirts around her and opened the parasol. She felt more like herself than she had done since she left the train, and almost forgot the many trying experiences through which she had passed since then. The water gurgled merrily as they glided along, and the dip-dip of the oars was very pleasant to her ears.

Emma Meets Sir Ralph the Rover

Ralph was a good rower, but his right arm was stronger than his left, which meant that the boat kept bumping into the bank with some considerable force. At each bump Ralph raised his cap and apologized, which nearly lost him an oar time and time again.

"It is strange that any one could think of making a boat without rowlocks and without a rudder," he said, as he pushed off once more. "It's the silliest boat I have ever been in."

"Have you been in many?" Emma asked.

"Quite a few," Ralph replied, "but they have all sunk."

"Oh," said Emma.

"It wasn't their fault," said Ralph. "It was mine. I shouldn't have taken them on a river."

"Are rivers dangerous, then?" Emma asked.

But at that moment there was a tremendous jerk as the "Daphne" nose-dived into a particularly hard part of the bank, sending Emma flying forward and throwing Ralph off his seat altogether.

"The oars!" he cried.

Emma recovered herself as quickly as she could and clutched at an oar as it drifted by. Ralph was struggling to get back onto the seat, but by the time he had done so the second oar had floated well away.

Ralph was a man of action. This time he did not wait to apologize, but snatching the dripping

Emma Meets Sir Ralph the Rover

oar from Emma began to turn the "Daphne" round in the direction from which they had come.

As soon as she was headed downstream he rowed frantically, first on one side of the boat and then on the other, in an effort to catch up with the drifting piece of yellow wood.

Every time he moved the oar across, it sent a shower of drops into Emma's lap but she did not complain. She happened to be one of those people who are splendid in a crisis, and to tell the honest truth, was quite enjoying herself.

"Are we gaining on it?" Ralph asked breathlessly, as he bent to the oar.

"Yes—yes, I think so," Emma replied, trying to get a glimpse of it as it bobbed up and down.

"How far off are we now?" he asked again, more breathless still.

"Nearly there, nearly there," said Emma.

"When we draw alongside, grab!" ordered Ralph, splashing the water about in his anxious haste.

It seemed as if they would never reach the oar. The tide was strong and carried it away downstream at a great rate. Ralph, however, gave good tugs, and little by little the distance grew less until they were within a few feet of it.

It was at this moment that Ralph made the mistake which cost him everything. Instead of leaving the grabbing to Emma as arranged, he

Emma Meets Sir Ralph the Rover

suddenly leant over the side of the boat. At the same instant the oar bobbed away to the left. Ralph stretched his arm out in a desperate effort to secure it. There was a lurch, a rush of water, a huge splash, and he and the remaining oar were gone.

Emma clutched the sides as the boat rocked violently. It was quite a miracle that she hadn't been shot into the river too, or that the boat hadn't capsized. It had shipped so much water that Emma's feet were completely submerged, but she paid no heed to that. Her one thought was for Ralph. Where had he got to?

In the excitement of the moment she had forgotten about the tide which had already carried the boat far away from the place where he had fallen in. But the passing scenery reminded her of this, and she turned her head to look back. There, a long distance off, was a small figure struggling out of the water and onto the bank. He was moving slowly as people do whose clothes are very wet. The next moment a turn in the river hid him from view, and that was the last she saw of Sir Ralph the Rover.

Once more Emma's heart misgave her. It misgave her so completely that she began to shiver and shake, which meant, although she wouldn't have owned it for the world, that she was desperately frightened. She was cold, too, which



That was the last she saw of Sir Ralph
the Rover

Emma Meets Sir Ralph the Rover

always makes things worse, for her dress was very wet and her shoes were soaked through. Anyone might have felt frightened in her position. Not only was she alone in a boat in the middle of a river, but she had no oars or rudder to help her. She was completely at the mercy of the tide, and tides, as she knew, end, sooner or later, in the sea.

Had she been a swimmer she might have jumped overboard and made for the bank, but she wasn't, so her only hope was to stay where she was, with the water swishing about in the bottom of the boat and the river growing ever wider and wider.

She gripped her hands together inside her muff to keep them from trembling. When, in the Museum, she had longed for adventure, she had never thought of anything like this. She had imagined nice, exciting things like the first-class seat in the train, and the run on the back of the young policeman's motor-cycle, and the meeting with Ralph with the prospect of being rowed to Scotland. But this sort of adventure was quite different. Perhaps the Nun had been right after all. Perhaps dolls were not supposed to seek adventure. Perhaps she ought to have been content to stay in the glass case where everything was dry and warm; where Mrs. Gingham dusted them each morning and George was there to see that they were safe.

Emma Meets Sir Ralph the Rover

What would they say if they knew what was happening to her now? What would Maud and the Shah and the Monk say? Emma felt something trickle down her nose and lie wet on her cheek. She gave a little sniff and groped in her bag for her handkerchief.

As she drew it out she saw the embroidery in the corner—the beautiful “E” surmounted by a crown—and with a half sob she pressed it to her lips.

“Oh, Princess, Princess,” she whispered, “I shall never see you again now.”

For many hours the “Daphne” floated on, and gradually the light of day faded and a mist began to rise from the water. Beyond the bank a silvery line of clouds broke, and a huge round moon looked down. It was the same moon that had lit up the Park on that first exciting night, the same moon she had often seen outside the Museum window after the visitors had gone and the building had been closed.

Perhaps Maud was looking at it this very moment and thinking of her. Perhaps she was wishing her “Good-night”.

In some way this thought comforted Emma. It made her feel less lonely and hopeless. She couldn't be very far away from everyone if the same moon were there, and with this assurance she leaned her head on the side of the boat and drew

Emma Meets Sir Ralph the Rover

up her feet onto the seat. The rock-rock of the movement was like the swing of a cradle and gradually, bit by bit, she forgot where she was and went to sleep.

She awoke several times during the night for the seat on which she was curled up, and the side of the boat on which her head rested, were by no means comfortable. The cold, too, was intense, and the swish-swish of water at her feet seemed to grow louder as time went on. There was an irritating squeak in the boat, too, which reminded her of the sound of George's boots. So like was it, indeed, that she half thought she was back in the Museum case, and found herself turning her head to look at the Nurse Doll with the child in her arms.

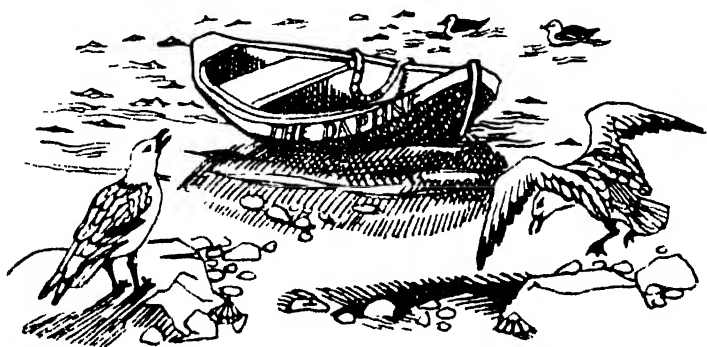
And then she remembered that she was in a boat, very much alone, and opening her eyes she saw through the grey light of early morning a stretch of water going on and on to a point where, before very long, the sun would rise.

She sat up with a jerk, and as she did so the boat rose on a little wave, swung sideways, gave a kind of backward twist and, with a grating, grinding sound, came to a halt.

Emma looked round, and her heart leapt for joy, for instead of being adrift on a

Emma Meets Sir Ralph the Rover

great ocean, she found that the "Daphne" had landed her, safe and sound, on a beautiful beach.



CHAPTER IX

On an Unknown Shore

The incoming tide was still playing with the boat, patting and pulling it this way and that, and making little hurried runs round the hull as if it were sorry to say good-bye, and Emma, realizing that even the best of tides will turn, made all speed to get out, choosing a moment when the water, running back, left the pebbles sparkling and hissing with excitement.

Pebbles are not easy things to walk on even if you are wearing big boots, and Emma's little shoes found them extremely difficult. It was like climbing over huge, wobbly rocks, so tiny a creature was she, and first she was perched high up, and then she was slithering down again, and then she was tripping, and then slipping, and then sliding, but she felt so grateful to be safe that she didn't really mind. The parasol, which had stood her in such good stead on many occasions already, came in very handy now, and helped her to balance herself when the pebbles rocked.

On an Unknown Shore

As soon as she was far enough up the shore to be beyond all possible reach of the tide, she sat down on a flat white pebble to think out what she must do. The sun was shining above the horizon now, blazing across the clouds and throwing a sheet of golden fire over the sea. It was a lovely, exciting morning. A trail of seagulls, as white as foam, flew in and out of the small waves, dipping, rising, wheeling round, and crying with eager expectation of food.

The only sad sight in the picture was the "Daphne". The little boat was still being roughly treated by the waves, picked up, twisted about, abandoned for a few moments, only to be picked up again. Emma would gladly have done something to save her had she been able, but she knew that her strength was not sufficient to pull a boat up the beach, and could only hope that the tide would turn before she was damaged, and leave her in some safe place where she might be found. You cannot spend a night in a boat without feeling that she is a friend, and although Ralph had thought the "Daphne" a silly craft, she had managed wonderfully well in the tidal river, and had brought her safely to shore.

But what shore?

That was the question that Emma had to solve, and as far as she could see there was absolutely nothing to help her. The beach itself was like any

On an Unknown Shore

other beach, covered with millions and millions of smooth pebbles that seemed of little use to anyone and only made walking extremely difficult. Beyond the pebbles was a stretch of sandhills covered, for the most part, with long, coarse grass, bending in one direction as if a giant had recently been lying on it and it hadn't yet recovered from the shock.

It didn't appear to be a good place to walk about on at all, in fact it looked almost impossible. There was, however, a strip of smooth beach lying between the pebbles and the sandhills and Emma thought it best to make her way towards it.

Saying good-bye to the "Daphne" was not easy. It was like abandoning someone who has shared a desperate adventure with you. But since the only alternative was to drag her along by her rope, Emma knew she must be firm with herself, and standing on the pebble on which she had rested, she waved her cambric handkerchief up and down several times.

The "Daphne", lying quietly on her side, didn't seem to notice. Perhaps she had fallen asleep, or perhaps she was looking the other way, so turning her back on the sea, Emma commenced her up-and-down struggle towards the level stretch of firm sand.

Her thoughts went back to Sir Ralph the Rover many times as she fought her way inland. She

On an Unknown Shore

wondered what he would do without his boat, and whether the loss of the "Daphne" would put an end to his roving. It seemed, from what he had said, that he could provide himself with a new boat whenever it became necessary, but Emma could not imagine how this was done, unless he belonged to someone who fixed him up afresh each time he went home after a wreck.

She would like to have seen Sir Ralph again. He had been so willing to help, and if only things had gone well would, she felt sure, have landed her safely in Scotland. But, like all her other efforts since leaving the Museum, things had not turned out as she might have wished, and here she was, on an unfamiliar and barren shore, and in all probability as far away from her destination as ever.

The beach was good to walk upon, and before very long she reached a place from which she could look between the sandhills to the country beyond.

It was nice country, Emma thought, with hills in the distance which might be where England ended and Scotland began, and deciding to go that way, she plunged through the soft sand. It was dreadfully soft, filling her shoes to the brim, and making them so uncomfortable that she could hardly get along at all. The coarse grass was particularly spiky and unpleasant too, and she was

On an Unknown Shore

very glad when she finally reached the fields that joined the sandhills on the other side.

The thing to do, she told herself, was to find a road, for roads have milestones and signposts, one of which might tell her where she was. Until now, Emma had had some faint idea in which direction her nose should point, but at this stage on her journey she was completely lost. How far she had come, and how far she had to go it was impossible to say. The only thing she knew for certain was that she must leave the sea behind her.

It was not long before a road came in sight, much like the others she had been on, with grass at the sides and closely cut hedges. It might easily have been the road along which she had dashed with Simpson, which set her wondering if the hunt for Number One Hundred and One was still going on or if they had given it up in despair. Simpson had been a kind friend. If it hadn't been for his help she might, at this moment, have been sitting in that horrid little cell. The wardress had been nice, too, in her rough way. Emma hoped she hadn't got into trouble for letting her escape.

Not far down the road was a large, low, ugly building. At first it seemed that it was making a terrific noise—as if every window and chimney were shouting. But it was not the building, as she soon learnt when a side door was opened and

On an Unknown Shore

dozens of children came rushing out, calling and whistling and yelling at one another.

Emma had never heard such a noise in her life.

"A school, I suppose," she said to herself, and stood still. After the trouble with the children who had mistaken her for a monkey, she had done her best to avoid them. Except for her Princess, who, of course, had been completely different, she had never had much to do with boys and girls, and all this shouting and running and playing was rather alarming.

Then she noticed that the children, who had raced away down the road, had grouped themselves round something that was standing in an open space by the side of a few cottages. It was a curious sort of thing as she discovered when she came a little nearer to it, rather like a long, giant box, standing on its end and covered with brightly striped material. There was a wide hole near the top, which reminded Emma of a stage in a theatre only, of course, very much smaller, and, by the time she had drawn nearer still, she could see some words running round a strip above the stage which said: "Patronized by His Majesty". . .

If she had looked round the side of the box thing she would have seen more words: "'s Subjects", but she didn't.

"His Majesty," she thought. "Patronized by

On an Unknown Shore

His Majesty!" And she crept a little closer to the eager group of children.

In a few minutes a very strange sound came from inside the box thing, an alarming sort of a laugh, quite different from any sound she had ever heard before. She expected to see the children run away, but instead they began hopping about with delight.

"It's Punch!" they cried.

The next moment the head and shoulders of a most odd person appeared on the little stage, with a heavy stick in his arms. He wore a high cap with a curved point, and he had the biggest nose she had ever seen on anyone.

The children laughed at the very sight of him, but Emma didn't feel like laughing at all. It was terribly puzzling, for he was neither doll nor man, in fact she could see quite plainly that he was nothing more than a head with a dress sewn onto it. Moreover, the voice that spoke was not his voice, but came from someone inside the box. He moved about, all the same, and, when other strange people joined him, became most active, banging them with the stick, but always getting the worst of it in the end.

If it hadn't been for the words above the stage Emma would have gone away, for there was something unnatural about the little players that troubled her, but the fact that His Majesty had

On an Unknown Shore

patronized the show proved that it must be all right. Also, as the play went on, she became quite interested in it, and would have clapped with the children if she hadn't been holding the parasol.

When it was over a thin, pale man came out of the back of the box with a hat in his hand and began to take a collection. At least that is what he hoped to do, but instead of giving him anything, the children ran away leaving the hat quite empty. Emma felt so sorry for him that she took the Shah's diamond out of her little bag.

"Here you are," she said, holding it out.

The thin, pale man looked at her in a very surprised way.

"Take it," she insisted. "It was a good show."

But the man shook his head.

"No," he said, "I'll not deprive you of a treasure."

Then he took a step closer and peered at her as if she were the strangest thing he had ever seen.

"Excuse me," he said, "but do you mind telling me who you are—or am I dreaming?"

"I'm a Royal Doll," Emma replied. How many more times was she to explain this? And why should the man think he was dreaming?

"A Royal Doll," he repeated. "I suppose that accounts for it."

"Accounts for what?" asked Emma.

Instead of replying, he passed his hand across



“Take it,” she insisted. “It was a good show.”

On an Unknown Shore

his forehead and blinked his eyes rapidly.

"I've not had a meal for a long time," he said. "I thought, maybe, I was seeing things."

"You had better take this diamond and buy yourself some food," Emma told him. "Why didn't the children give you anything?"

The man didn't reply. Nor did he take the diamond, which seemed strange, considering how valuable it was.

"I'll pack up and get on to the next place," he said. "This one has been a wash-out."

Emma watched him place the box on a hand-cart and put the wooden players into an old case. He did it all in a sleepy sort of way as if he were thinking of something else. It didn't take long, but when everything was ready, instead of starting off along the road, he sat down on a patch of grass.

"I'll have a bit of a rest first," he said, half to himself, and rolling over on his side he went to sleep with his arm across his face.

Emma wished she had asked him the way to Scotland before he lay down, because she was very anxious to reach her journey's end. She looked about to see if there was anyone else to direct her, but the place seemed to be deserted, so seating herself on the grass with her back to the wheel of the hand-cart, she waited for the man to wake up again.

On an Unknown Shore

After a time he stretched his arms, turned over on his back, opened his eyes and sat up.

"Hello!" he said. "So you're still here, are you?"

"Yes," said Emma.

"Then you weren't a dream?" said the man, giving an enormous yawn.

"No, of course not," said Emma. "And now that you are awake, will you kindly tell me the way to Scotland?"

"The way to Scotland?" echoed the man. "Whatever for?"

"Because I am going there and am not sure of the direction," Emma replied.

The man looked at her.

"But how do you propose to do that?" he asked. "You'd never walk to Scotland this side of the millennium."

Emma had no idea what the millennium was, but she wouldn't say so.

"I have travelled to this place by taxi, train, motor-cycle, and boat," she said, "so I suppose I shall find some way of going on." She didn't mention the barrel-organ because the whole thing had been so horrible.

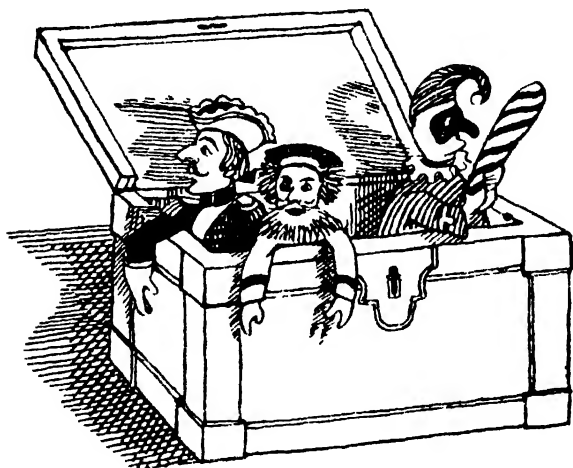
"Well, Scotland lies somewhere up there," said the man, indicating the direction. "And it will take me the best part of six months to reach it, so you can see how far it is."

On an Unknown Shore

Emma suddenly leapt to her feet.

"Are you going to Scotland too?" she asked delightedly. "Could I travel with you on your cart? I'm not heavy."

"At your service," said the man. And so the arrangement was made.



CHAPTER X

With the Punch and Judy Show

Travelling on the hand-cart suited Emma perfectly, except that she wished they could move at a more rapid pace. But the fact that every turn of the wheels, however slow, brought her nearer to her Princess, was a joy in itself, and as she saw the road slipping away behind and winding on ahead she felt like singing aloud.

At each village they halted, put up the little theatre, and gave a show. That is to say the man, whose name was Charlie, gave the show, while Emma sat quietly on the hand-cart and watched.

The only trouble was that Charlie got so little money. Although the show always drew crowds, and the audience laughed and clapped from beginning to end, very little money found its way into the hat, which meant that he was constantly in a state of hunger.

Often, from the hand-cart, Emma felt like standing up and beseeching the people to give pennies. She thought that, if she explained how

With the Punch and Judy Show

little Charlie had had to eat, they would be sure to fill the hat to the brim; but things like that are very difficult to do, even if you are a Royal Doll, and she could only sit and wait while the thin figure moved among the scattering children, hoping to see a hand go out and hear a coin clink.

Little by little the country through which they passed changed. There were fewer hedges and trees, and more hills and stone walls. The air was keener, too, as if it meant business, and Emma often found herself glad of her muff, and of a little green and red plaid cloak which Charlie put round her and which, he said, had once belonged to Judy.

Pulling the cart kept Charlie warm, but when he stopped to fix up the show, she often saw him shiver beneath his thin coat, and sometimes his hands were so cold that it was all he could do to work the puppets.

"If only he would accept my diamond," she said to herself again and again, "he would be really rich." But each time she offered it he smiled and shook his head.

"I wouldn't take your treasures from you," he always said, as he had done on the day they had met.

Never had Emma imagined a journey could be so long as that one to Scotland. Sometimes she wondered if they would ever get there; if, perhaps,

With the Punch and Judy Show

Charlie had lost his way, and instead of travelling north they were just going round and round. Every day the same hills—or others just like them—stretched across the distance. Every day the same long road ran on and on and on.

If it hadn't seemed impatient she would have asked Charlie how much farther they had to go, but the sight of his bent shoulders as he pulled the cart along kept her from saying anything. It might have seemed as if she thought he was not doing his best, or was resting too much.

If by any chance the show went well and the collection was good the cart moved quickly, speeding along with a will; but when things were bad it seemed as if the wheels hardly turned at all, and Charlie would pause at the top of every little slope, and lean back against the puppet box and say nothing.

If only she had been bigger she would have fixed a rope to the cart and pulled by his side, but she was such a tiny thing, growing tinier, she sometimes thought, as the journey went on.

Then, one morning, after an early start, with the cold wind bustling round the cart and the sky golden with a frosty sunrise, they came to a place where great hills rose from the road itself, covered with short grass and alive with hurrying streams. Emma breathed the air excitedly. There was something different about it, something that

With the Punch and Judy Show

seemed to say, "Nearly there, nearly there!"

She looked at Charlie. He was pulling hard, so hard that the little stones on the road jumped and rattled out of his way. And then he suddenly stopped.

"Done it!" he gasped, and drew the back of his hand across his forehead. "Phew!"

For a moment Emma felt alarmed. Then she understood. By the side of the road, perched up against the bank, was a signpost, a big, strong, solid post, with no nonsense about it; and on the two arms, stretching north and south, were the words: ENGLAND—SCOTLAND.

Emma stood up and clapped her hands.

"How wonderful!" she exclaimed.

It was, indeed, so wonderful that they stopped there for fully five minutes, gazing at the post as if they couldn't tear themselves away.

"Well," said Charlie, at last, "that's something done, anyhow. I thought it was going to beat me!"

He jerked his shoulders back, stamped his feet on the hard road, and prepared to go on.

Emma had been so glad to find herself in Scotland that she had quite forgotten about the rest of the journey, but now it seemed there was still a great way to go.

Charlie, who never did a lot of talking, moved on mechanically with only an occasional word,

With the Punch and Judy Show

but she learnt that the castle which belonged to the Royal Family was far off among the hills, and that it would take a long time yet to get there.

It was fortunate that Charlie happened to be going in the same direction as the castle, otherwise she might have felt uncomfortable about taking him so far out of his way. He promised to drop her safely at the gates before travelling on to a big fair at which he hoped to do very well, after which, he said, he would start back again in the spring.

As day followed day, Emma's spirits rose higher and higher. The weather was very cold but bright and sunny, and except on the stiff hill roads the wheels of the cart spun along gaily. Charlie still halted to give a performance wherever there was a chance of drawing a crowd, but Emma felt that the long, long journey was coming to an end, and then. . . .

She gripped her little hands together and smiled into the sunlight. Her feet would have danced with joy if she had let them, and her old silk dress was ready to twist and twirl and billow out around her ankles. O she was happy on that last hopeful stretch, and things went brightly for both of them.

Then came the day when, passing along beside a river, with frost covering the heather twigs and the hills rolling their shoulders against the wintry sky, Charlie broke the news that, if all went well,

With the Punch and Judy Show

they would reach the castle before sunset.

Emma kept silent. She could not trust herself to speak. But her eyes travelled far ahead towards a place among the trees where she fancied the castle might be. The landscape had already taken on that cared-for appearance which always surrounds a royal residence, and Emma's nostrils quivered as she breathed in the air of refinement and well-being to which she had been accustomed in the long-ago days.

Morning passed, and the short afternoon was speeding towards evening, when Charlie pulled up.

"See it?" he said, pointing ahead.

"Yes," answered Emma, quietly.

The chimneys and turrets were hardly distinguishable from the great trees in the half dusk, but her heart tugged and thumped beneath her little cape until it seemed her very breath would leave her.

As they drew nearer still, she felt a curious shyness, a trembling that was quite new.

"Emma," she said to herself, "what is the meaning of this?" And shaking back her shoulders she sat up very straight on the puppets' box. She had lived for this moment, and now that it had arrived she almost dreaded the pull-up of the cart and the halt of the wheels.

Charlie was moving along just as he had always

With the Punch and Judy Show

done, his head bent forward, and his thin neck stretching out of his frayed collar. Then the sound of his boots on the road stopped. There was the familiar jerk and tip as the cart drew up, and Emma knew the journey was over.

"I'll wait around for a bit," he said, ignoring her thanks for all he had done, and as she crossed the road he drew the cart to the side.

There was no difficulty in entering the grounds. No one challenged her or tried to keep her out. Nevertheless it took some time before she found herself facing the great building. A side door, standing open, suggested an easy entrance, and Emma was just about to walk in when a person in livery appeared and asked her business.

"I wish to see the Princess," she replied, holding her head as high as possible.

The man looked at her for a whole minute before he spoke again. Then he cleared his throat and took a step forward, compelling her to go back.

"The family left Scotland some time ago to take up residence in London," he said, and closed the door.

Emma did not move. She went on looking at the door as if she thought it must, surely, open again. But it didn't. It remained firm and dark and solid, a hopeless sort of door, keeping her out.

Then, at last, she turned away.

With the Punch and Judy Show

By the side of the drive was a little stone, cold and uncomfortable, and on this she sat while tears poured over her face and dripped onto the ribbons of her cape. Her Princess had gone; it had all been in vain. Better—far, far better—never to have come away at all.

But sitting on a stone did no good, and after a time Emma got up and made her way to the road. She had stopped crying now, and folding her handkerchief, she replaced it carefully in her bag and tried to straighten out her cape ribbons. She was glad she had done this, for Charlie was still waiting close to the gate, almost as if he were expecting her, and she didn't want him to know how terrible the disappointment had been.

"Is the family out?" he inquired as she joined him.

"They have taken up residence in London again," she replied, in her most royal manner.

"Well I'm blowed!" said Charlie. "And they never let you know?"

"She wasn't expecting me," Emma retorted loyally.

"Who wasn't expecting you?" asked Charlie.

"The Princess," Emma replied.

Charlie looked puzzled.

"Which Princess?" he asked.

"My Princess," said Emma, with a lift of her head. "When we lived together in the Palace she

With the Punch and Judy Show

had dozens of dolls but I was always her favourite. We meant a great deal to one another."

"How long ago was that?" Charlie asked.

"Over a hundred years," said Emma. "Well over a hundred years, now."

Charlie looked down at the small figure before him, standing so straight and proud in her funny old clothes. He knew he would have to tell her, but it was terribly hard.

"See here," he began, and cleared his throat.

"Yes?" said Emma.

"I'm not much good at saying things," Charlie went on, "but it's best you should know."

"Know what?" Emma asked, almost defiantly.

"Why—that your Princess—the one you belonged to—isn't here now. I mean, you see——"

"Not here? Not anywhere?" said Emma, beginning to grasp his meaning.

"No," Charlie replied.

Emma stood very still. The cold wind blew her cape this way and that, impatiently.

"Then it has all been no use," she said at last, in a little voice. "The Nun was quite right."

"I'll tell you what," Charlie broke in, trying to be bright. "You come along with me to the Fair, and then I'll take you back to London. How's that?"

Emma didn't reply. What did it matter where she went? She had no further interest in Scotland

With the Punch and Judy Show

or England or any other place. Mechanically she allowed Charlie to help her onto the puppets' box; her hand felt for the cord as the cart jerked up, and slowly they moved away into the darkness of evening.

CHAPTER XI

The Man with the Black Hair

Things went badly after that. Charlie did his best to be cheerful, but money was scarce, and the weather was bitter, and sometimes it seemed as if he would stop dead on the road, unable to go another step.

The result was that Punch and the rest of the little troupe played their parts in such a lifeless way that few people even took the trouble to stop and watch them. An outdoor show must be really good to hold an audience when the wind blows cold.

"Things were better when I had Toby," Charlie said. "But I couldn't afford to pay the license and he had to go."

It was after a specially bad day, when the collection had only amounted to three pennies and a halfpenny, that an idea came to Emma. She found Charlie crouching behind the little theatre blowing into his hands and beating his arms across his chest to try to get warm. He looked so very

The Man with the Black Hair

poor and thin that her heart ached for him. Something must be done about Charlie, she told herself, and she must do it.

Then the idea arrived.

It was a desperate idea, but Emma was often desperate these days, and what did it matter if it was a common sort of thing to do?

So she told Charlie all about it.

"Dance?" he repeated, when she had finished. "But can you dance?"

"Of course I can," said Emma. "I was taught by the best French dancing master. The Princess and I learnt together. I can dance beautifully."

Charlie considered.

"There's precious little room on that strip of stage," he said. "It was all Toby could do to sit on it."

"I could manage," said Emma. "I'm smaller than a dog."

"It would be a novelty," Charlie admitted. "It might prove a draw. We'll put it on as a separate turn and see how it goes."

And that was how it came about that a Punch and Judy show, travelling in the Scottish Highlands that winter, became so amazingly popular.

It didn't happen all at once. The first few performances brought little change. Emma was nervous, and so was Charlie. The stage was so high up, and so narrow, and the whole thing seemed

The Man with the Black Hair

so perilous. But gradually word got about that a dancing doll was to be seen taking part in the



show, a most unusual doll, wearing a poke bonnet, a little circular cape, and a silk crinoline, who performed a minuet, and pirouetted, and curtsied,

The Man with the Black Hair

and ran on her tiny toes in a truly wonderful fashion.

And when the hat went round, pennies fell fast with a cheery clut-clatter, and sometimes there were silver pieces as well. Never was a Punch and Judy show so successful, and although the people came principally to see Emma, Charlie's part was now so full of fun and wit that they applauded from start to finish and were quite sorry to see the little theatre move away on its two wheels.

The work was so new and the success so exciting that at first Emma joined with Charlie in his pleasure at the turn things had taken, but little by little the old ache came back, and many a time she wondered if she could possibly go on. If it hadn't been for the Fair, at which Charlie hoped to make a fortune, she would have said good-bye and started off alone to find her way back to Maud and the Shah and the rest of her friends in the glass case. It would even have been a pleasure to see the Nun again, she thought, although she was so stern, and to hear George humming to himself by the window, and to watch Mrs. Gingham going round with her duster in the morning. What would they say if they knew that she, Emma, a Royal Doll, was dancing in public? Would they be shocked? Or would they understand that she had done it for Charlie's sake, and to keep her own heart from breaking?

The Man with the Black Hair

As the time drew near, Charlie talked of little else but the Fair. He was very bright, had good meals, and was saving up to buy an overcoat. He got some paint and touched up the puppets, and reprinted the words, "Patronized by His Majesty's Subjects", which had become faded and blurred with the sun and rain.

"We're going to be the biggest draw on the ground," he said. "I wouldn't mind betting we do more business than all the rest put together!"

The Fair was to be held on the outskirts of a town and was to run for three days. As they approached the ground they were joined by caravans and gipsies, while traction-engines drawing lorries stacked high with swing-boats went by with a lot of noise and smoke.

The Punch and Judy pitch was in a corner between a Dart's Competition Booth and a show called, "The Headless Giant". Charlie was very pleased with the corner because there was plenty of room in front for people to stand and watch without getting mixed up with one of the roundabouts.

"It couldn't be better," he said, rubbing his hands together.

Emma looked about her with a sinking heart. The whole Fair, as she saw it, was exceedingly objectionable. There were rough people everywhere, and a nasty smell of hot fat and fish which



'The Fair was to be held on the outskirts
of a town.

The Man with the Black Hair

blew towards them from a cooking place of shining ovens, while noises of every kind beat into her ear without a pause.

How could she dance in a place like this? It had been different in the country where everything around was quiet and peaceful; but the Fair was nothing short of pandemonium. Moreover, she had grave doubts about how her dance would be received. Suppose the people booed? Suppose they threw things?

Then she caught sight of Charlie's beaming face, and was suddenly ashamed.

If kings and queens were called upon to perform deeds of heroism for their country, she told herself, she could do the same for Charlie. And, besides, what did it matter what happened now?

So the show was given, and then another and another, and at the close of each performance the hat was full.

"I could go on like this all day!" Charlie announced. "This is what I call business!"

The audience behaved very well, and every time Emma appeared there was a burst of applause. More than once the clapping was so long and so loud that she had to give an encore. Nothing like her had ever been seen before, and the people were delighted.

Emma tried not to look about her while she danced, pretending she was in the Palace with her

The Man with the Black Hair

Princess and the French Instructor—listening to his excited exclamations, the beat of his toe on the polished floor, the quick snap of his fingers—but somehow or other her eyes would stray to the fringe of the crowd where, at every performance, a man stood watching intently. He was an unusual sort of man, quite unlike anyone else at the Fair, with black hair that floated about in the wind, for he wore no hat. His face was pale, and his chin buried in the fur collar of his big coat.

Emma found herself wondering who this man might be, but directly her part in the show was over he always moved away and she had no means of finding out.

On the last day he waited until the performance was over and then made his way to the back where Charlie was counting the takings. Emma, who was resting behind the puppets' box, could see all that was going on without being observed.

From his pocket the man drew a leather case, and from the case he took a card which he presented to Charlie.

"Excuse me," he said, "could I have a word with you? My name is Adrian Trevor."

Charlie bundled his money into a bag and twisted the neck tightly before tying it up. Then he took the card and looked at it.

"I've a business proposition to make," Mr. Adrian Trevor went on, "but this isn't a very good

The Man with the Black Hair

place in which to talk things over. How about some fish and chips?"

"All right," said Charlie, and followed Mr. Adrian Trevor in the direction of the fried fish bar.

Emma watched them until they became mixed up with the steam which rose from the polished stoves. She felt a little anxious. What did Mr. Adrian Trevor mean by "a business proposition"? What was he going to say to Charlie?

She waited as patiently as she could for what seemed a very long time imagining all sorts of things until, at last, Charlie came back.

It was quite clear that he had something very important to say, and making their way to the back of the tents they sat down on the grass. In his hand Charlie still held the visiting card. He kept his eyes fixed on it trying to think of the best way to explain what had happened.

"It's like this," he began. "He's got a show of his own in London—marionettes, you know—and he wants you for a dancer."

"Oh," said Emma.

"Yes," said Charlie, "that's what he wants."

"Does he know who I am?" Emma asked. "Did you tell him that I am a Royal Doll?"

"Yes," replied Charlie. "And I said what you'd done for my show, and he's promised to compensate me."

The Man with the Black Hair

"What's that?" asked Emma.

"Pay me handsome for you," said Charlie.

"That wouldn't be buying me, would it?" asked Emma.

Charlie shook his head.

"You don't belong to me, and you don't belong to no one—unless it's the King," he replied.

"What would I have to do?" Emma asked. "In the show, I mean."

"Dance, like you do now, in front of the curtain. And you'd have a proper little theatre with footlights and all," Charlie said. "You're in luck, that's what you are. He's a clever chap and he's got a clever show, anyone could tell that to hear him talk. I shouldn't be surprised if you make a name for yourself in town."

"I don't want to make a name for myself," said Emma, quietly. "It would not be the sort of life I have been used to at all. Still, I think I will agree to the proposal."

"That's the stuff!" said Charlie. "I'll be sorry to lose you. You've set me on my feet all right and I'll not forget it. But you shouldn't miss a chance like this."

It was clear to Emma that the sum he was to get in compensation must be a big one, and she was glad. No longer would Charlie be poor; no longer would he pull and strain at the cart because he was weak and hungry. He had, as he said, been

The Man with the Black Hair

put on his feet, which was wonderful when you came to think about it.

Mr. Adrian Trevor was leaving for London the next day by an early train, Charlie said, and she was to travel with him. Before dark they would be steaming into the great station which had been the first stage on her adventurous journey. How strange it seemed! Perhaps she would see the kind porter again. Perhaps she would drive in the same taxi which had rushed her, so perilously, through the streets on the night of her escape. Perhaps she would pass close to the Museum and look up at the very window behind which stood the big glass case!

CHAPTER XII

The Famous Dancer Arrives

Emma didn't sleep at all that night. Mixed up with the thought of the journey and the new life that lay before her, were noises of packing, for the Fair was over and the caravans were preparing for a start at sunrise.

It was impossible to rest peacefully while roundabouts were being taken down; while swing-boats were being packed together, and men shouted, and horses stamped and neighed, and everyone was astir.

While the stars were still bright in the night sky, Emma got up. She couldn't lie still any longer with so much going on, and although she had no preparations to make herself, she felt that she must join in with the general movement.

The air was frosty and the fair-ground was white with rime. Emma had never seen a prettier sight. Lamps bobbed about among the dismantled shows, throwing odd-shaped shadows across the scene, and in the centre a bonfire crackled and

The Famous Dancer Arrives

flamed, and sent a twisted pillar of smoke up to the sky. Everything was exciting and mysterious at that early hour, and a little sad, too, in a way.

The Headless Giant, who had a perfectly good head really, and wasn't much of a giant either apart from the mirrors inside his show, was packing up his booth himself. His caravan stood a little apart, and Emma watched as the great sheets of canvas were stretched out on the ground and folded together, with the painted pieces of cardboard, that had formed the front, laid neatly on the top. The picture of the giant, with his awful neck ending in nothing and his great arm wielding an enormous club, was packed by itself because it was very precious, and the bugle which his wife blew to attract the people was wrapped up in a bag.

When everything was ready the Giant harnessed his horse to the caravan, and climbed up to the driver's seat while his wife mounted the steps at the back and closed the low door behind her. Out of the top of the door hung the Giant's children, waving their hands to the fair-ground as the caravan rumbled away.

Almost the last to leave was Charlie, and the sun was up and the stars gone before he and his cart were ready. He had promised to take Emma to the station where she was to join Mr. Adrian Trevor, and was then going to turn his face south

The Famous Dancer Arrives

and work his way slowly back to London. He whistled to himself as they went along the road and Emma knew that he was happy.

All the same, when it came to saying good-bye, his voice was husky.

"I'll never forget what you've done—straight I won't," he said, grasping her tiny hand in his long, thin one as the train was about to leave. "You've been a good friend to me all along and I wish you luck!"

Then the whistle blew and Charlie stepped back as the train moved away.

"Good-bye, good-bye," said Emma, fluttering her cambric handkerchief and blinking a little. She and Charlie had been through hard times together and it was not easy to part. Then, as the train left the platform, she sat back on the seat, tied the ribbons of her cape which had somehow come undone, settled her bonnet, and ran her hands over her silk skirt. A new life was beginning and she must be prepared for it.

As the country, through which she and Charlie had travelled so slowly, went whizzing by, Emma heard a good deal about the Marionette Show. It was, she quickly learned, a very good show indeed, and was to be seen at all the best children's parties. It also went to exhibitions, and was so popular that Mr. Adrian Trevor was always busy. He had been arranging for performances in Scot-

The Famous Dancer Arrives

land too, but these would be later on at the end of the London season. Emma would wear lots of beautiful dresses, he said, and when she had learnt more dances she would have fancy costumes and jewels.

"I like this dress," said Emma, letting her fingers lie on the stiff silk.

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Adrian Trevor quickly. "So do I, of course, but it must be very old, surely?"

"It is," said Emma. "It was made by a Royal Princess more than a hundred years ago."

"Really?" said Mr. Adrian Trevor.

"And my muff, and my bag, too," added Emma.

"Well!" said Mr. Adrian Trevor, with surprise.

"I would like, if I may, to wear this dress always," Emma went on, with her eyes on her lap. "I shouldn't be me if I wore something else."

He gave a little laugh.

"Well, we will start with the old dress and see how things go," he said.

"Thank you," said Emma. She didn't tell Mr. Adrian Trevor about her handkerchief or the diamond because she felt he wouldn't understand, but she took the little piece of cambric and held it tightly in her hands as the train raced on.

It was late before they came to the end of their journey. The wintry light over the country had

The Famous Dancer Arrives

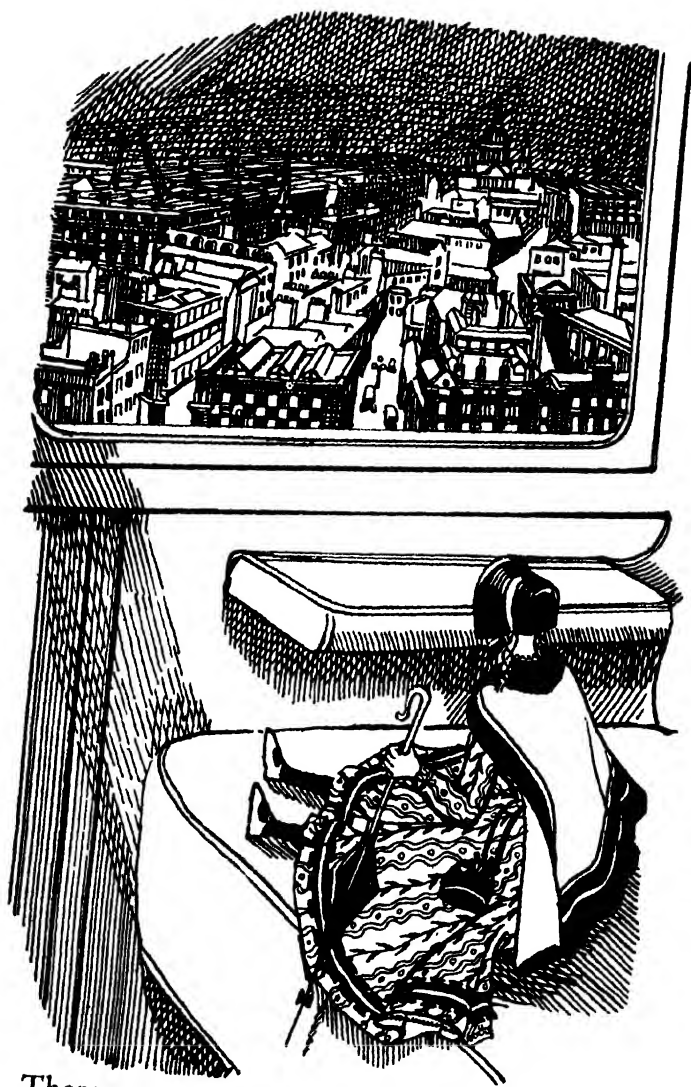
faded away early in the afternoon, and by the time the streets and houses began to form themselves into a town on the outskirts of London, there was nothing to be seen but yellow dots shining through the darkness to show where the roads lay, or where rows and rows of houses stood shoulder to shoulder like a great army.

Somewhere ahead, in that mass of buildings, stood the Museum, and Maud was there. Emma comforted herself with this thought again and again. She would love to see Maud. She would even be glad to see the Nun. If she didn't like being a dancer for Mr. Adrian Trevor, she would go back to the Museum and be a very special doll again.

She wondered what George would say if, when he opened the case one morning, he found her standing in her old place on the shelf, with her eyes looking straight in front of her and her hands placed tidily in her muff! Perhaps he would never notice; or he might say that she had been away so long that they couldn't have her back.

"Oh, but he wouldn't," Emma told herself. "I was one of the most special of all the dolls because of having belonged to a Royal Princess. He would never turn me away."

And then the train began to run more slowly, jerking over points, and feeling its way past signal-boxes and warehouses and goods stations.



There was nothing to be seen but yellow dots
shining through the darkness.

The Famous Dancer Arrives

And then it ran more slowly still and, with a tired sort of sound, came to a halt.

"Here we are," said Mr. Adrian Trevor, reaching up to the rack for his suitcase, and helping Emma down.

There were a great many porters running about but she didn't see the kind one who had been such a friend, nor was the taxi, into which they got, the same taxi that had taken her to the station.

Emma sat far back on the seat with her feet close together pointing straight up. She held the parasol very firmly and said nothing. Of all her adventures this, perhaps, was the biggest.

"Emma, the famous dancer, arrives in London," she said to herself, and held her head rigid on her little neck, and kept her back as stiff as a poker.

The taxi drew up at the stage door of a theatre which, for several weeks to come, was to be Emma's home. The tiny room in which Mr. Adrian Trevor kept his marionettes and his show properties was at the back of the stage and quite comfortable, and although everything felt very strange to begin with, she was happy there.

The marionettes, like Charlie's Punch and Judy puppets, were not real dolls, but pretend creatures with loose joints, and their heads, hands, and feet were all attached to strings or wires. Emma didn't like the look of them to begin with, but once she

The Famous Dancer Arrives

knew that they were not real she paid very little heed to them.

Mr. Adrian Trevor came nearly every day for a rehearsal at which Emma danced. He was going to give a performance at a very important exhibition quite soon and Emma's dance was to open the show. She was to wear her own dress, with her muff, and bag and bonnet, and was to give a minuet first, followed by an old French dance which was rather difficult and ended in a pirouette on her toes. It needed a good deal of rehearsing, and after Mr. Adrian Trevor had gone each day she went over it again and again by herself.

One night, when the theatre was closed and the actors and actresses had gone, Emma peeped out of the door of the little room. Everything was very quiet and dark, but high up among a lot of curious looking things hanging from the roof, one electric light had been left burning.

Like a little mouse, creeping from its hole, Emma made her noiseless way into the great shadowy space behind the stage, where all kinds of strange objects had been left about, and came to where the huge wings stood. Then, with a gasp of excitement, she tiptoed onto the stage itself.

The thread of light fell in a narrow line across the boards and Emma, following it, came to the centre of the stage facing the immense black hole in which the audience sat when the play was on.

The Famous Dancer Arrives

“Emma, the World’s Wonder Dancer, will now give her Royal Minuet,” she announced in a whisper, and curtsied to the floor. Then, holding her skirt with the tips of her fingers, she danced.

Never was there a stranger performance. So large and dark was the theatre, so tiny was Emma in the one strip of light, so odd the shadow that followed her. She fancied she heard the clapping of hands, but it was only the flip-flap of a blind, and the creak of boards settling themselves for the night.

CHAPTER XIII

“Fame, Emma, Fame!”

The exhibition was held in a large hall. It was opened by a duchess and was crowded with grand and wealthy people. How different it was from the fair-ground, and how much easier it would be to dance in!

Emma was taken to a dressing-room and was told that the Marionettes would not be performing until the afternoon. Being so important, she had to keep herself hidden, but while everybody was listening to the speech made by the duchess, and following her round afterwards, she peeped out to see what was going on.

The passage was empty, but on the wall was a notice with an arrow. The notice said, “CHILDREN’S ROOM”

Emma was sure that no one would see her if she looked into the Children’s Room for a minute, and hurrying down the passage she made her way there. The door was standing open and the room was empty of visitors so she went in.

"Fame, Emma, Fame!"

All round the walls were stalls containing toys of every description, strange old toys that reminded Emma of the Museum. There were dolls' houses full of furniture, and rocking-horses, and funny old books, and tops, and kites that children must have played with long ago.

And then, as she was passing a corner, she suddenly heard her name called, "Emma! Emma!" and looking up she saw Maud, and not only Maud but the Shah, and the Nurse Doll with the child in her arms, and the Monk, and even the Nun!

"Oh!" cried Emma, throwing out her arms to them. "Oh, Maud, Oh, Shah, how lovely to see you again!"

"Where have you been? What are you doing here?" Maud asked excitedly, leaning over the front of the stall, while the Shah, beaming with delight, blew kisses from his finger-tips.

"I knew we should meet again, you and I!" he exclaimed.

"Dear friends——" Emma began, but her voice was husky, and her eyes so full of tears that she could hardly see the faces above her.

"It has been so dull without you," said Maud. "I have been on the point of running away again and again. Have you enjoyed it? Was it a good thing to do?"

Emma hesitated. The Nun, with her hands buried in her sleeves, was watching her intently.



She suddenly heard her name called, "Emma,
Emma!"

"Fame, Emma, Fame!"

"I have had many adventures," she said, at last. "too many to tell you about now."

"Did you find your Princess?" Maud asked eagerly.

Why did she say that just then? What made her ask that question? Emma shook her head and turned away.

"I must be going," she said. "I am a dancer now—a Royal Dancer, you know," she added quickly, lest they might misunderstand her.

"A dancer, a dancer!" cried the Shah. "Oh, how I adore dancing!" And he lifted his arms and pointed one toe.

"I have your diamond still," said Emma, feeling in her bag. "I think it would be best for me to give it back. Your coat needs it, you know, and I cannot use it now."

"Well—perhaps——" said the Shah, glancing down at the pieces of thread which still showed where the button had been.

He stooped down and Emma tossed the diamond up into his hands very carefully. It seemed strange that it had come back to the Shah again.

"And the parasol," she added. "Would you look after it for me, please? It has been most useful. It saved me when I had to escape from a high building, and has kept me dry, and sheltered me on many occasions."

"Fame, Emma, Fame!"

Instantly the Monk undid his rope and Emma tied it onto the handle.

"I will see that it is returned to its owner when we are taken back to the Museum," he said gravely.

"Thank you," said Emma.

After the parasol had been hauled up she stepped back into the room and waved her hand again and again. She tried to say good-bye but somehow she couldn't. Then the sound of footsteps and voices in the passage outside reminded her that she must hide, and hastening away, she found herself once more in the dressing-room.

The Marionette shows were a great success and Mr. Adrian Trevor was delighted. The performances took place in a special room, and so many people wanted to see them that there were long queues outside the door for each performance.

Emma ought to have been enjoying herself, but she wasn't. Somehow or other she had begun to dislike the whole thing. The excitement of dancing before an audience was fading away, and she knew in her heart that it was not the sort of vocation a Royal Doll should follow. Her sacrifice for Charlie had been quite different. Charlie might very easily have starved if she hadn't helped him; and, besides, he had been very kind all through that long, cold journey. But Mr. Adrian Trevor was not the same at all. He was quite kind,

"Fame, Emma, Fame!"

of course, but there was no fear that he would starve if she stopped dancing for him.

She didn't tell anyone what she was thinking—there was, indeed, no one to tell—but sitting by herself in the dressing-room between the shows, she made up her mind that she would give it all up as soon as the exhibition came to an end and go back to the Museum.

Where else could she go? She was tired of adventures; tired of making her way about the world; tired of meeting with people who did not understand how Royal she was. At the Museum she would hold her own again as something very special. Visitors would look at her and wonder at the fact that she had lived in a palace. They would think her clothes beautiful instead of laughing at them as some people now did. And she would have Maud and the other friends to talk to, and would feel that she was safe. On the last day of the exhibition she would take up her position among the other dolls in the Children's Room and be driven back with them. No one would notice her arrival, and once in the case she would go to her old place and pretend she had never been away. And Mrs. Gingham would come and dust her in the morning, and she would hear George humming to himself by the window—the same little song about the girl who was fond of him. . . .

"Fame, Emma, Fame!"

It was dark in the dressing-room that late afternoon, and no one saw Emma drop her head into her lap; no one noticed how her little shoulders shook and her hands trembled together. When Mr. Adrian Trevor dashed in and switched on the light, he was far too excited to notice the tears on her face or the wet marks on her faded silk skirt.

"Get ready quickly!" he cried. "As fast as ever you can!" and hurried round to the back of the Marionette theatre to make hasty preparations.

Emma tied her cape ribbons and passed her handkerchief over her face.

"What has happened?" she asked, for Mr. Adrian Trevor was very excited, and a piece of his dark hair had fallen right across his forehead.

"The biggest thing possible!" he replied, diving his arm into the theatrical box. "Fame, Emma, fame!"

She watched him in a superior sort of way. She didn't like excitable people.

"We are to give a special performance in the Children's Room in an hour's time," he said. "You must dance your best—your very best."

"I always do," said Emma.

"I know—I know. But to-day you must surpass yourself. You must lift the roof!"

"Yes," said Emma, "I will."

She folded her handkerchief and put it into her bag. Then she saw that both tiny shoes were se-

"Fame, Emma, Fame!"

curely fastened, and sitting down on a mat, laid her hands placidly one on the other.

"I will dance for the last time this afternoon," she told herself, "and I will dance as never before." But her lips did not move, and her eyes, as they watched Mr. Adrian Trevor, gave nothing away.

"I don't see why a show in the Children's Room should be so very important," she said aloud.

"Ah, but you don't know!" said Mr. Adrian Trevor mysteriously. "And I'm not going to tell you until it's all over."

Emma wondered what it would be like to dance before her Museum friends. She thought it was highly possible that the Nun might disapprove, but it couldn't be helped. The Shah would enjoy every moment of it; Maud would like it too, and the Monk would be interested in his mild way, although he would say nothing.

She began to feel a tiny bit excited herself although she wouldn't admit it, for Mr. Adrian Trevor was in such a state of tension that it was difficult to remain calm.

"Give them whatever they ask for," he said. "As many encores as they want."

"Yes," said Emma.

"Keep the French dance to the end," he continued. "Work up to it, but keep it for the climax."

"Yes," said Emma again.

"Fame, Emma, Fame!"

"How do you manage to keep so calm?" asked Mr. Adrian Trevor. "You sit there as still as a little image. How do you do it?"

Emma considered.

"I suppose it is because I am Royal," she said. "Royalty is taught to be still."

Mr. Adrian Trevor pushed his hair back from his forehead.

"Then what Charlie said was true?" he muttered, half to himself, fixing his eyes upon her. "I thought he was making it up."

"Of course it was true," said Emma.

He went on looking at her. He seemed, for the moment, to have forgotten all about the show.

"And that accounts for your proud manner, and your assurance, and the way you hold your head, and the wonderful sense you have of dancing?"

"I suppose it does," Emma assented.

"Very extraordinary," Mr. Adrian Trevor said beneath his breath. "Quite phenomenal."

And then he remembered that he had a great deal to do and very little time to do it in, and Emma was left on her mat wondering at his ignorance.

CHAPTER XIV

The Royal Doll Comes Home

THE Children's Room had been emptied of visitors, and a number of chairs were placed close together in rows before a dais on which stood the Marionette theatre.

On either side of the theatre hung velvet curtains which made it look very grand and exciting. Emma found an opening on one side through which she could see the children coming in. They entered so quickly that all the chairs, except some that were reserved in the front row, were filled in a few minutes, and a crowd of disappointed boys and girls had to be turned away.

At the side of the room stood the Museum dolls on their stall. Emma thought they would have quite a good view although they were not in the middle. Maud's good-natured face was wreathed in smiles, and the Shah was all animation. Someone had stitched the diamond button onto his coat and it glittered in the artificial light. The Nurse Doll was holding the child higher than

The Royal Doll Comes Home

usual so that it might see something of the show, and the Monk's eyes were busy looking this way and that although his head kept still. But the Nun remained as severe as ever, disapproving of everything, with her mouth set in a firm, hard line.

"I had better forget her or I shall never dance at all," thought Emma, and turned her attention to the children who were so excited that they could hardly remain seated.

Just before the show was to begin, Mr. Adrian Trevor asked her to come to the back of the theatre and go through a few steps. There was no need for this, but he was so worked up that she thought it best to do as he wished, and was in the middle of one of the pirouettes when a burst of applause sounded from the front of the curtain.

"What was that for?" asked Emma anxiously. "The show hasn't begun, has it?"

"No, no. It's nothing," said Mr. Adrian Trevor hastily; "only the children getting impatient. Go on with the dance."

But Emma insisted that she would tire herself, and going back to the side of the stage, she put her eye to the slit in the curtain.

The entire room was full of young faces, turned expectantly towards the theatre. In the middle of the front row sat a little girl whose eager expression attracted Emma strangely. She had a sweet,

The Royal Doll Comes Home

gracious little way of moving her head, and her eyes were very bright and full of fun.

"I will dance for her, and forget the Nun," thought Emma, and at that very moment Mr. Adrian Trevor came hurrying from the back to say that the show was about to commence. The footlights were switched on, the tinkling music of the toy orchestra began, and she took her place in the centre of the stage waiting for the curtains to part. On the other side of the curtains was the little eager girl. . . .

There was a hush in the room. Everyone was waiting breathlessly for the opening dance. Emma spread out her skirt and pointed the tip of her toe. In some way she couldn't explain, she knew that one of the greatest moments of her life had come. Out of the corner of her eye she could see Mr. Adrian Trevor's pale, anxious face in the wings, with the streak of black hair falling across his forehead.

The signal for the curtains to be drawn back was given, accompanied by such an outburst of clapping that Emma paused for a moment, bowing her head slightly in acknowledgment, then, falling in with the time of the tune, she commenced the wonderful old minuet that had so attracted Mr. Adrian Trevor when he saw it danced at the Fair.

During the first few steps Emma felt curiously nervous. Was the Nun watching her? Was she



She commenced the wonderful old minuet

The Royal Doll Comes Home

thinking it wrong to dance? Was she drawing in her thin lips, and tightening the grip on her wrists inside her large sleeves? Emma felt she was doing badly; that her movements were unsteady; that instead of "lifting the roof" as she had been told to do, she was spoiling the show.

"Forget the Nun, forget the Nun," she said to herself, and fixed her eyes on the front row.

There, among the many faces, she picked out the little girl with the bright eyes. The little girl's lips were parted, her small head was keeping time with the tune, and as Emma glided forward, she smiled at her as if she were a friend.

From that moment everything changed. Instead of a room full of people, it seemed that there was one little girl and one tiny dancer, and that the little girl was absorbed in what she saw and the tiny dancer was performing for her alone. No wonder everything went so well, no wonder the audience forgot themselves and stood up and shouted for another dance, and then another and another.

"Splendid!" cried Mr. Adrian Trevor between each performance, throwing back his lock of hair as if he himself had been dancing and had become breathless with the effort. The Marionettes went well too, and, from her resting-place at the back of the stage, Emma could hear the children laughing and clapping with delight.

The Royal Doll Comes Home

It was a wonderful afternoon.

At the very end, after the French dance had been given not once but twice, and Emma had curtsied again and again in front of the curtain, she blew a special kiss to the little girl, and the little girl bowed to her.

Something in the way she bowed brought back days—long, long ago—when, in the Palace, Emma had watched her Princess bow to her guests before they left. There was the same poise, the same dignity. Emma drew her fingers across her eyes. Had all those years in the Museum been a dream? Was she still a Royal Doll in a Royal Palace? Was her Princess really here?

"Come, Emma," said a voice, and she found herself being taken back to the dressing-room where the Marionettes and the little theatre were being placed in their corner.

"Was it all right?" she asked.

"It was magnificent!" said Mr. Adrian Trevor.

Emma sat down on her mat and folded her hands.

"I am glad," she said.

"I never saw a more enthusiastic audience," Mr. Adrian Trevor went on. "I shall be up to my eyes with bookings after this."

At that moment a voice was heard outside calling his name, and he hurried away leaving Emma alone.

The Royal Doll Comes Home

He did not come back for a long time and when, at last, he appeared at the door he looked at her in a curious way.

"I thought this might happen, and it has," he said slowly, half to himself.

"What?" asked Emma.

"The Princess has fallen in love with you," he replied.

"The Princess?" Emma questioned, unable to understand.

"Surely you knew she was there, sitting in the front row?" said Mr. Adrian Trevor.

Emma did not speak.

"She wants you for herself," he explained, "and what a princess wants she usually gets. But it means that I shall lose you."

"Yes," said Emma.

And so it happened that her life with the Marionettes came to an end.

The next day, after saying good-bye to her Museum friends, she was taken by Mr. Adrian Trevor to the front of the Exhibition where a magnificently polished motor-car was drawn up close to the curb. A smart attendant in uniform assisted her onto the seat and touched the peak of his cap as he quietly closed the door behind her.

"Good-bye!" said Mr. Adrian Trevor. "Good-bye, and thank you!"

The Royal Doll Comes Home

Emma smiled and bowed. It was her last touch with the old life.

Within five minutes the car was swinging through the Palace gates. The sentry stood to attention and the policeman saluted. An instant later it had drawn up, and Emma found herself facing the crimson carpeted steps with their wide brass rods twinkling in the sunshine. At the top of the steps the door of the Palace had been flung wide.

The tiny figure gripped her hands together inside her muff and threw back her head.

"Emma, the Royal Doll, comes home!" she whispered.

